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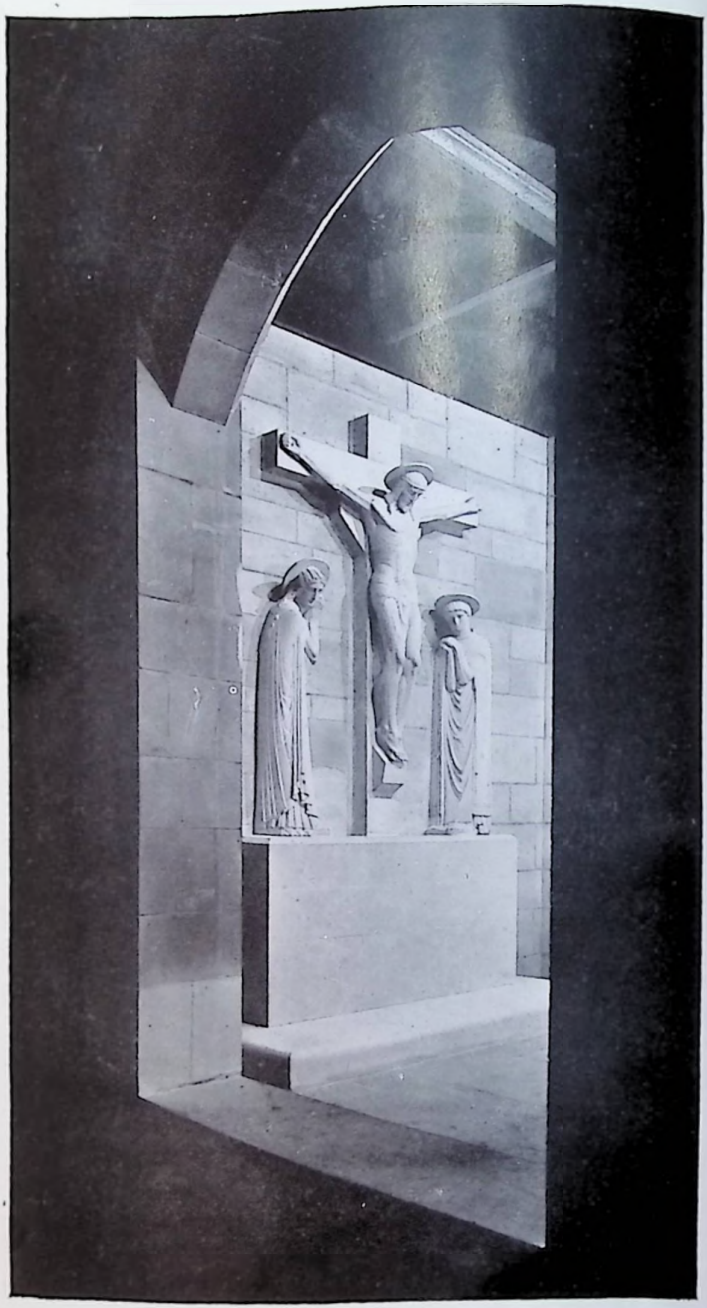
LAURIE OF OLD S. PAUL'S



LAURIE OF OLD S. PAUL'S

A MEMOIR

BY

LAWRENCE WILSON

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PROLOGUE

'τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.' Inscribed in fastidious characters on the flyleaf of a much used Greek Testament, the words give us at once an insight into the character of the man who chose them. "The Light of men." A. E. Laurie spent his life in the worship of that Light, and in mediating it to his fellow men. There must, of course, have been passion, but so completely was his personality bathed in that Light that his awareness of God seemed instinctive, and his power to reveal God to others as simple and effortless as a flower turning to the sun.

On the flyleaf is also the date, 1887—two years after he had gone to Old S. Paul's as a lay reader, and while he was still at the Theological College. The book has the Authorised and Revised Versions printed in columns parallel to the Greek text, and in the fourth column are notes in Laurie's own hand, sometimes in pencil, more frequently in ink—points of grammar, exegeses, analyses of argument, copied quotations, comments that approximate to affective prayer. All his life he made these marginal notes—the writing varies from the microscopic script of student days to his later style of printing—for the

devotional absorption of the Light was continually scrutinised by accurate scholarship.

But at twenty-one he had already evinced his love for S. John's gospel—for its spirituality, its symbolism, and, above all, for its emphasis on the sacramental nature of life. In later years, when asked to define his theological position, he replied, "I dislike and distrust labels, but I suppose I might be described as a sacramentalist."

The story which follows is an attempt to trace in his work the various expressions of that sacramental belief which was implicit from the beginning. His life was not dramatic in the commonly accepted sense of the word: the whole of it, with the exception of the war years, was spent in the one congregation; and in the daily duties of the parish priest, the adventures are spiritual rather than bodily. Worshipping the Light, mediating it to men: these two activities claimed all his energy, all his devotion; everything else is irrelevant or incidental.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

I

Laurie was born in 1866. It is not easy to revisit the Edinburgh of that period with accurate imagination. The general features were much the same then as to-day. Across the recently acquired Princes Street Gardens, the old town, picturesque but dilapidated, eyed the new.

> Long years have fled
> since watchmen first looked north
> on fields untenanted
> far as the Forth.
>
> Yet could he now behold
> the roofs beneath his feet,
> grey fold upon grey fold,
> street upon street.
>
> Would not his heart with ours
> leap at to-day's new wonder—
> proud castle with its towers,
> proud City under.

In summer, one fancies, the suburbs were more pleasant and certainly less populous than to-day.

Green fields fringed Leith Walk, the Braid Hills stood in open country. Goldenacre must have earned its name when Granton and Trinity were still villages. Robert Louis Stevenson tells us that such corners as Canonmills or Water Lane or "the nugget of cottages at Broughton Market" were more rural than open country. "They looked abashed and homely, with their gables and their creeping plants, their outside stairs and running millstreams; there were corners that smelt like the end of the country garden where I spent my Aprils; and the people stood to gossip at their doors, as they might have done in Colinton or Cramond."

But winter in the old town was pitiful. Stevenson speaks of that "sunless and disreputable confluent of Leith Street," and there were hundreds of closes and wynds which had a stronger claim on these adjectives. Bleak enough by day, night added a greater dreariness. The lighting everywhere was bad—Princes Street had incandescent burners towards the end of the century, but in 1866 the "bats' wing" squeaked feebly over the growlers and horse omnibuses that plied for hire. The Lauries, and other families like them, driving in their carriages on the annual visit to the pantomime, paid their sixpenny toll at Bonnington, and pushed their way through the grime-streaked portico into the over-heated Theatre Royal, forgetful of the difficulties of transport and the gloom of the streets. Not until

1895 came electricity, and four years later that perennial source of pantomime humour, the Cable Car.

But there were graver aspects than discomfort. The living conditions in the old town were appalling. The disaster of Chalmers' Close in 1861 revealed them in all their squalor, and became a symbol to haunt the public conscience. Stevenson tells how " the building had grown rotten to the core; the entry underneath had suddenly closed up so that the scavenger's barrow could not pass; cracks and reverberations sounded through the house at night . . . . when in the black hours of a Sunday morning, the whole structure ran together with a hideous uproar, and tumbled story upon story to the ground."

Nor was it only decrepit and insanitary housing. At this period too, (and for how much longer), drunkenness was rife, and rotted lives by the hundred. In its train came poverty and sickness, brutality and illegitimacy and crime. The conditions throughout the century struck sorely at the Christian conscience, and called men like Chalmers and Chambers, Guthrie and Littlejohn, to fight against them.

Indeed a city of contrasts, when one could look through drying linen from a tall *land* in the High Street across the railway lines to the recently built Post Office, and see, perhaps, the sunlit Forth beyond Bonnington, and the clear coast of Fife.

Albert Laurie was born on the 25th of June in 1866. His happy childhood was spent in a pleasantly roomy house in Bonnington and in a garden on the Fife coast. Twenty years later he went among the tall *lands* of the High Street and the Canongate, and made his home there for the rest of his life.

II

Albert Laurie was the fifth child in a family of six sons and one daughter. His grandfather was a doctor in the Army. John Laurie, Albert's father, would seem to have married young; his wife, Janet Collingworth, was a beautiful woman, daughter of a Gaelic speaker from Tobermory who scarcely "had the English" when she went south to marry. Janet retained her youth and vigour well into middle life, and once when she had partnered one of her sons at a Masonic ball, the young man was approached for an introduction to "the pretty girl in pink." Beautiful, gay, and yet with a deeply religious nature, it is no wonder that John Laurie wanted to marry her even before he had qualified as a lawyer, so married they were, at Woolwich, and then the whole family was moved north, presumably into married quarters at Leith Fort. Here the final examinations were taken, and, having set up in business for himself as a solicitor and accountant,

John Laurie and his wife rented their own house in Pitt Street, where all seven of their children were born.

A few years later they left the grave stone terrace in that wide street and went to Laverock Bank, a spacious house which stood in its own grounds, nearer Trinity, and here the greater part of Albert's childhood was spent.

They were a lively and versatile family: George, the eldest, gifted as a pianist, went to study music in Germany; Hector, articled as a lawyer on leaving school, emigrated later to Australia where he was killed in a riding accident; David, the favourite of the family, qualified as an architect, tired of his work, and died in his early twenties, a coffee planter in the New Hebrides; John, headstrong but able, went to sea, broke his indentures, yet became the youngest Commander in the trade between China and London: then Albert Ernest, christened in honour of the Prince Consort: and then James, who wanted to be an actor, but went instead to South Africa where he served with the Cape Mounted in the Jameson Raid and returned a seasoned filibuster. He fought again in the Boer war, and died just afterwards of blackwater fever. Youngest of all was the girl, Janet.

To have been one of such a family would in itself be an education in character: soldier, sailor, artist and musician, priest and lawyer, the talents of later

years must have been there in embryo, but at the time of which we write they were a happy and normal family, devoted to parents whose tendency was to spoil them, and to their sister, whom they teased only less than they petted.

The boys were sent to Bonnington Academy, commonly known as "Hunter's," and later went to the Royal High School. Janet had a governess who came in by the day, and returned in the evening to supervise the home work of the older ones. Needless to say Miss Todd was teased, but seems to have borne it with equanimity. Each night they hid from her, but she carried on complacently. "You may as well come out," she would say, "for I know you're all here somewhere." They laid booby traps—Albert was particularly expert in the matter of cushions and jugs of water—and hid themselves in a wardrobe ("I remember the smell of it yet," he said, not long before his death) to watch the result.

They acted plays and charades, and grouped themselves in living pictures. Janet was dressed in boy's trousers and stuffed out with pillows to impersonate Mr Pickwick; Albert exulted in the costume of a Bashi Bazouk.

No special piety marked their early years; Albert was arrested for stone throwing in the street before he was ten, and though the charge was dismissed—the policeman being held to have been over-officious—in later years he used to recall with a certain

humorous satisfaction that his name was somewhere inscribed in an official register.

In the early summer they migrated to Aberdour where they either owned or rented a large house in its own gardens. The journey was made by steamer from Leith and each Saturday the " Lord Aberdour " would bring them a Lottery Box from an indulgent father. Youthful morals were not above fumbling in the opening beneath the Union Jack for the most interesting package, until Mr Laurie took to disguising the smallest gift in the biggest wrapping.

The boys, allied with two other families, were notorious characters; escapades in their sailing dinghy, the Evadne, from which they swam and fished the summer through; escapades with poachers in the Cullalo Woods: escapades with public property, as when they moved bodily a certain wooden convenience to the extreme end of the pier and put up a notice " For the use of troops in the Sudan."

It would appear that in the summer they ran wild: there was, indeed, an Indian tutor, known as " Joss," but what he taught them, what his name was, or why he was living at Aberdour, are mysteries which remain unsolved. The other memories of childhood are so much more vivid—Hector painting the cat and her two kittens with blue ochre: Albert supported on a dining-room chair in the garden, being sick after smoking his first cigar; the ghost, staged at

midnight in the "chapel" (a small room off the library at Laverock Bank) when James broke his arm in a headlong rush to escape; the toy Theatre where Albert produced Mazeppa; the flagstaff in the garden from which they flew the family colours on all birthdays.

All through his life Albert delighted his friends with his Franciscan sense of fun. That, also, seems to have been there from the beginning.

III

But there was a more serious side to his education. Although his headmaster and his form master might shake their heads over his compositions, and send home reports regretting his weakness in English grammar, Albert was an omnivorous reader. In their library at Bonnington, commonly known as the Book Room, stood a large book case, and Albert, climbing nimbly up the shelves, would lie concealed at the top, reading for hours on end. One of his nicknames was the Professor, which suggests that he was something of a book worm. To the end of his life he was rarely seen without a volume in his hand. At Christmas the sofa in Lauder House resembled the counter at Grant's or Elliot's. He read in trams, in trains, on the streets. He admitted (boasted is too strong a word for what he later regarded as bravado) that he had once "read his way" across Piccadilly Circus.

Not a scholar in the academic sense—and after all the life of a city priest gives little opportunity for writing—Laurie was essentially a cultured and widely read person, and one of the secrets of his charm was that he kept well abreast of modern literature—a feat all the more remarkable when one remembers that an attack of measles in childhood deprived him almost entirely of the sight of his left eye. He read aloud beautifully: one Sunday evening at Lauder House he took down Chesterton's poems and read the whole of the "Wild Knight." "I once asked G.K. what it all meant," he said as he closed the book, "we were walking along Pall Mall and he flung aside his cloak and drew the sword stick he used to carry, and brandished it in the air, and threw his head back and laughed."

Laurie also loved the theatre and had a keen critical faculty. He found talking a useful means of clarifying his ideas, and on his last visit to London, a Christening was held up while he discussed Elizabeth Bergner's performance in J. M. Barrie's "David" with other clergy in the vestry. His comments were to the point—he had disliked hearing the grand periods of Old Testament language spoken in broken English—but the memory that remained was of his anxiety and care to arrive at a scrupulous truth even in his impressions of a play.

Consequently it does not surprise us that books

figured largely at Laverock Bank. Every night, during the winter, when home work was done, their father read aloud to them: Dumas and Dickens were the favourites, Scott not so popular, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and Holy War marked if not digested. Other authors were admitted—Tennyson and Browning, Harrison Ainsworth (what different associations the words "Old St. Paul's" were later to acquire) and a terrifying chronicle about Lancashire witches.

Albert's hobbies, too, had an important influence on his later life. He was extremely clever with his hands—even at the age when one plays with toy soldiers he could cut the figures out of tin, smoke them and varnish them with almost professional skill. Chemical experiments fascinated him, occasionally disastrously, as when he made "Red Fire" in his brother's music room, blew up the apparatus, started a blaze, and received serious personal injuries—a scar remained permanently on one hand.

Sometimes his experiments reflected his humanitarian sympathies. With so many hungry people in the world, was there no means of feeding them simply? Grass was everywhere plentiful, could it not be reduced to some form which the human palate could assimilate? Large supplies of very superlative grass (containing clover which would supply the natural sugars) were obtained on an excursion to Fife, and put in pots to boil with water. As the

moment approached for the decanting of the elixir, the stench became more and more unbearable. "The place smelt like a stable," he admitted afterwards, and it took hours to scour the saucepans into a usable condition again. In years to come he loved to preach from the text, "From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" Did he recall, one wonders, in St. Mark's description of the people sitting, as plants in a garden, on the grass, a memory of his own early attempt to solve this problem?

But electricity was his passion—a passion that one cannot help feeling was symbolic, that absorption of interest in a mysterious force, limitless in its power, but which nevertheless allowed itself to be studied and used by man. The hobby began, of course, with a boyish interest in bichromate cells and home-made condensers, prune jars lined with tinfoil from which he could—and did—electrify the tail of the long-suffering cat.

But those who knew the little study in Lauder House realised that the boy's hobby had become a potent intellectual symbol. On the table stood a Wimshurst machine; the shellac painted glass discs were not spotless, and the brass and mahogany fittings were dim. At the best of times it was little more than an ingenious toy, a piece of platform apparatus for a popular lecturer. But to Laurie it was a symbol—and more than a symbol, a religious relic.

On his desk stood a photograph of Michael Faraday's portrait by Thomas Phillips in the National Portrait Gallery. It shows the scientist seated by a table on which stands the battery from which, presumably, he derived the current for his work on Electro magnets —a preliminary step towards his tremendous discovery of the dynamo. The hands are folded quietly, and above the white shirt front and the black cravat, the head is held at a slight angle, a face of grave intelligence and saintly sweetness. It may have been the combination of the scientific genius with a great benefactor of men (Faraday's lamp has saved thousands of lives) but it is known that Laurie admired this man with an enthusiasm amounting to hero-worship. He bought life after life of Faraday, and, once he returned from a memorial exhibition in London with a small chip of wood. "I cut it with my penknife from underneath his table when no one was looking," he explained. He admitted the vandalism of the act, but was impenitent; a relic is a relic, however come by.

IV

In the matter of religious upbringing, Laurie was as blessed in his home as in other ways. His father and mother were church people of the deepest conviction, and felt impelled towards expressing their faith in works. John Laurie had lively sympathies that

made friends easily with the oddest of characters; his contact with people was direct and unaffected. He felt himself called by God to preach to the stevedores at Leith Docks and though his wife shrank from the publicity of open air evangelism, her loyalty took her with him. The first meeting on the quayside at the foot of Coal Hill impressed an indelible memory: Mr Laurie, his wife, and one small boy as audience. But the work grew: they hired a first floor room in Storey's Alley, and decided to open with a Soirée. The helpers were willing but incapable: the guests were met by streams of tea flowing down the stairs from upturned urns, but friendships were formed on a foundation of dry buns and cakes.

The Lauries were members of St. James's, Leith, and Sunday after Sunday they occupied the family pew. Little Albert sat rubbing his cheek against his mother's sealskin coat: all his life, touch was one of the most delicate of his senses. He had fantasies about the box in which their Prayer Books were kept: if he could only become infinitely small, he thought, like Alice in Wonderland, he could get into that box. Inside there was a passage, which led away down to a banqueting hall: tables were spread—

> " a heap
> " Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
> " With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
> " And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
> " Manna and dates . . . ."

And here he would regale himself until the sermon was over. Freud could doubtless have sifted the symbolism; would he have found, one wonders, the incipient desire to substitute the social banquet of the Eucharist for the impersonal respectability of Mattins?

From a sense of duty, religious instruction at home, as distinct from the religious life of church, was insisted upon. Every Sunday afternoon the family scattered to different rooms to learn the Church Catechism by heart. The dining-room was the most coveted study, because one could climb out of the window and make faces into the drawing-room where others were still being questioned.

Theory and practice did not always go hand in hand: Albert, struggling with the fourteen clauses of his duty towards his neighbour, sighted James, in the garden, cutting letters in the skin of an apple he was about to eat. "My duty towards my neighbour," stammered Albert, "is to love him as myself . . . . (What *were* those letters James was grinning over? . . . .) . . . "to hurt nobody by word or deed. . . ." James held up the apple silently to the window; over his mother's shoulders Albert read the most detested of his nicknames—Stumples. With mounting anger he rattled off the remaining clauses —"and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me. . . ." Then pell mell to the garden where with one blow he knocked his brother down.

The child is father to the man. The Rev. Ronald Selby Wright, Laurie's Presbyterian neighbour in the Canongate, tells two stories, "illustrating the militant manliness of this very saintly man." Once when he was quite young he was accosted by a rough character under the bridge in Market Street, not very far from Old St. Paul's. "Laurie slowly took off his coat and then knocked the fellow down good and hard." Much later in life, interviewing one of the hundreds of scoundrels who found their way down Carrubber's Close, some one passing heard him say, "in his usual quiet way," relates Mr Wright, "and stroking his lovely white hair, 'If I were a younger man, I would kick you right downstairs!'"

The worthy Canon Jackson seemed cold and unsympathetic to the young people of Leith, but at the age of fourteen Albert went to him to be prepared for Confirmation. He was the only youth in a class otherwise composed of five old women, and he received two instructions. At the private interview, having been asked to name the great Christian festivals, he replied, "Christmas and Easter," and was forthwith confirmed.

It was, perhaps, rather barren pasture for young lambs, but the weekly excursion provided one episode of supreme importance. The Royal Artillery was stationed at Leith, and every Sunday a detachment paraded for service at St. James's, marching through the streets in the charge of a

subaltern. To Albert, then aged about eight, the sight was entrancing: the discipline of the men, their smart bearing, neat uniform, pill-box hats set jauntily on one side of their heads. Best of all was the officer, marching at the rear, his sword clanking importantly on his thigh.

Albert, tugging at his father's hand, looked up and asked enthusiastically, "When I grow up, can I be an officer in the Army and carry a sword?" and his father replied, "Yes, of course you can: but it is a far finer thing to be an officer in God's army, and to carry a Cross."

Laurie's vocation to the priesthood dates from that moment.

V

But this happy childhood was not to last for ever. Suddenly and unexpectedly the crisis came which was to alter their lives completely. In 1878—when Albert was twelve years old—John Laurie fell ill and had to undergo a serious operation. Professor Annandale, a leading surgeon of the time, undertook the risk of employing a new technique. Recovery was inevitably slow. Mr Laurie had put his business, including the administration of a public fund, into the hands of one of his clerks. Eminent surgeons and physicians in the city—Professor (later Sir William) Halliday Croom, Professor Milne Murray, Dr Paterson, Mr

Freeland Barbour—came to visit him during his lengthy convalescence, interested in the first place by the novelty of the case, and returning as friends of the family. At last he was able to get back to the office. But fresh disaster awaited him; the clerk had absconded; the public monies had been misappropriated; the Laurie family was completely ruined.

Mr Laurie's first and only thought was to clear his name. Voluntarily he put himself into the hands of the official receiver. His clients showed little sympathy. The officers arrived while the family were at luncheon, and the children were terrified to see the soup tipped out and the plates snatched from the table, under their eyes.

Every stick of furniture except personal effects, was taken, and for several nights the family camped on the bare boards of the empty house. Relatives were written to and help arrived; a flat was found in Montague Terrace, at the end of Inverleith Row, and dingy furniture was installed; Mr Laurie set up a new business for himself in Hanover Street; the boys who were old enough went out to fend for themselves. Life of a kind began again—but only of a kind: weakened in body by illness and crippled in spirit by calamity, Mr Laurie died in poor health ten years later. His wife had a severe nervous breakdown. Albert continued for a term or two at Bonnington Academy, but there was no money to

send him to the Royal High School, so he too, came home, and studied the advertisement columns in the newspapers. George eked out a precarious livelihood teaching music—he was still in Germany when the crash came. Hector and David emigrated to Australia. John went to sea.

Family life, like the family fortune, had been broken. Childhood was over in an evening. Youth, as brief as a tropical dawn. Manhood and responsibility came with the new day.

VI

It was about this time that Laurie's religious life began to develop in a more mature way. He had given up going to St. James's, Leith, and had come under the influence of an eccentric but spiritually minded priest, Mr Hardgraves, then Rector of Christ Church, Trinity, who preached well, and had the reputation of being High Church without being ritualistic.

As a youngster, Albert entertained somewhat puritanical notions, and was known to reprove others for such matters as singing secular songs on Sunday. Now he was to discover something of the beauty of religion—a beauty which could transform severity into austerity, and which could call out love as well as fear. In later years he often spoke of the

profound effect membership of the Communicants' Guild at Christ Church had upon him. It was there that he really learned to pray and meditate, and it was there that first began his great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. One Sunday night he arrived home late in great excitement, having heard for the first time Bishop Heber's eucharistic hymn. It had not then been included in Ancient & Modern, and now, having committed its eight lines to memory, he burst into his sister's room, eager to repeat them to her:

> Bread of the world in mercy broken,
> Wine of the soul in mercy shed,
> By whom the words of life were spoken,
> And in whose death our sins are dead:
> Look on the heart by sorrow broken,
> Look on the tears by sinners shed,
> And be Thy feast to us the token
> That by Thy grace our souls are fed.

It was from Mr Hardgraves, too, that he learned his typical emphasis on the religion of the will: if conscience advised a certain course, his moral courage carried it out literally, no matter whether other people might consider him absurd. For instance, he took quite literally the words of invitation to Communion, "Ye . . . that are in love and charity with your neighbours," and early one Sunday morning, he wakened a school friend to apologise for something he had done or said the day before.

This unselfconscious, even courageous, thoroughness, was typical of his whole religious life.

Because there was no outward ceremonial at Christ Church, Laurie did not realise how sound a Catholic he had become. His father was a staunch broad Churchman who dreaded ritualism, and Albert naturally accepted this point of view. "Roman Catholics at least are honest and open about it," said his father, "but the Puseyites are worse than Jesuits, for they use underhand methods." Hardgraves admittedly was "high" in theology, but Mr Laurie admired him for his good preaching and his hard work, and was quite willing that Albert should attend his church.

So the foundation was laid. And all the more securely because the appeal was spiritual and not mixed, as is so often the case, with considerations of an aesthetic nature.

VII

One morning during the year 1881 a small paragraph appeared in the *Scotsman* advertising the post of laboratory assistant in the Physiology Department of the University. The wage offered was slender, but might serve. The appointment lay in the commendation of Professor Milne Murray, already a friend of the family. Albert's application

was successful and he duly started work, preparing slides for microscopic study in the histology department. Clever with his fingers, and with a strong bias towards science generally, Laurie was no ordinary "lab. boy." At Minto House in Chambers Street (for the new medical buildings were not in existence at this time) he met again the other doctors who had attended his father, and they also put work in his way, so that, in a short time, he was not only earning more money, but was learning a good deal of chemistry and physiology and anatomy.

Halliday Croom told him bluntly that he was wasting his time: talent like his should not be allowed to dissipate itself. Laurie replied that he felt called to the priesthood, that he was only trying to save enough money to get him through the Theological College, and that his evenings were spent in the study of Latin and Greek and in attending lectures on those subjects at the School of Arts. To this Halliday Croom urged that the work of healing was essentially a Christian priesthood. Laurie replied that in any case he had no money to pay his fees, but so convinced was Halliday Croom of Albert's ability that he undertook to guarantee the expenses of training, and the boy, now about sixteen years of age, was enrolled as a matriculated student of the University.

It was a time of great intellectual ferment, and at no point was the issue more debated than in the clash

between science and religion. Modern philosophy has toned down the cocksure dogmatism of the scientist, but even to-day thousands of half-educated people are under the impression that somehow or other science has disproved religion. If such Pseudodoxia Epidemica are our heritage to-day, we can guess the battle of the giants which rolled and thundered throughout the nineteeth century and left such wrack behind. The onslaught was shattering, for Theology was equally arrogant in its scientific monopoly. An English divine of the seventeenth century had ingeniously calculated (from the genealogies of Genesis) that man was created on October 23, B.C. 4004, at 9 o'clock in the morning. Now came the new evidence of Lyall, the eminent geologist, whose book, *The Antiquity of Man,* was published in 1863—evidence which, to all reasonable men, did indeed outweigh the literal statements of Genesis.

Geology shook the infallibility of the Bible, but left the creation of some prehistoric Adam and Eve a still admissable hypothesis. But not for long—at least according to the scientists of the time. In 1859 Darwin published his *Origin of Species,* and in 1871 his *Descent of Man,* and for nearly half a century these two books remained the gospels of men of liberal or agnostic outlook. They were, too, what the Christian gospels were to the ancient world—bombshells. If the men of Thessalonica declared

that the " brethren " were " turning the world upside down," their alarm was no greater than that of certain orthodox upholders of Christianity in the nineteenth century. Bishop Wilberforce stated that the principle of natural selection was incompatible with the Word of God, and Gladstone wrote scornfully that " Upon the grounds of what is called evolution, God is relieved of the labour of creation, and in the name of unchangeable law is discharged from governing the world." For us, to-day, the smoke of the battle has cleared. Philosophy, and in some quarters science too, has vindicated religious belief in the transcendence of God. On the other hand, scientific discovery has taught us much that is valuable about the wonder and mystery of God's immanence. The issue is now seen to be one of polite definition. Then, it was a life and death struggle.

And while geology and zoology attacked the Church from without, higher criticism assailed her from within. The persecution of Strauss and Renan and Bücher (all of whom were deprived of their professorships) only fanned the movement. Bishop Colenso initiated it in the Anglican church and others, including Jowett, whose influence at Balliol was immense, continued the attack. The fatal fascination of brilliant polemics led to a distortion of truth. The rationalists became less and less reasonable as they ground their particular axe and

made the sparks fly. Invective and wit came to count for more than sober judgment. For instance, Sir Leslie Stephen wrote in 1873 that "it may be said, with little exaggeration, that there is not only no article in the creeds which may not be contradicted with impunity, but that there is none which may not be contradicted in a sermon calculated to win the reputation of orthodoxy and be regarded as a judicious bid for a bishopric." While popular assimilation of the new creed found its expression in Swinburne's *Songs before Sunrise*:—

> "By thy name that in hellfire was written, and burned at the point of thy sword,
> Thou art smitten, Thou God, Thou art smitten; Thy death is upon Thee, O Lord.
> And the love-song of earth as Thou diest resounds in the wind of her wings—
> Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things."

Into this arena of scientific humanism Albert Laurie descended with zest. Against the pessimism of Matthew Arnold he opposed the optimism of Robert Browning. Against the material scepticism of Huxley, the humble faith of Tennyson. A few years later, Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe,* a squib mistaken for a high explosive, banged its way noisily through Europe in fourteen languages. Laurie read that, and everything else he could lay hands on.

Apologetics were a lifelong passion, and if his days and nights were spent in exciting debate with other students, his own religious views remained unshaken. The orthodox party, thank God, was not without intelligent champions; in science, Laurie felt more and more drawn to the side of Professor (later Sir James) Arthur Thomson (" That grand old Viking," as he called him); and in Theology, Charles Gore was working out his impressive synthesis of modern thought with Catholic faith and practice.

It is not known what over-ruled Laurie's early intention of taking orders at this time, but two years later he still felt the hand of God strong upon him. It was not easy to tell Halliday Croom that he had decided to give up his medical studies, and in truth one must admit that the Professor was vexed and also angry—naturally enough. " You are giving up the substance for the shadow," he said. But Laurie stuck to his point, and that without losing Croom's friendship: several years later the older man came to his ordination and gave him a most handsomely bound service book in token of forgiveness.

Nor were these years at the University by any means wasted. Their permanent influence in shaping his mind is incalculable. The intellectual *Sturm und Drang* widened his sympathies. He enjoyed undergraduate life, the companionship of the class rooms, the rambles over the Pentlands, the singing of student songs, the torchlight processions, in

which, like many another, he ruined his clothes and burned himself. Friendships formed brought much happiness—friendships, apparently, which took him away from the atmosphere of the lecture room to congenial pursuits out-of-doors. A few days before his death, lunching with the Town Clerk of Anstruther, he recalled a fishing expedition in a Crail yawl with his friend of student days, the late Professor John Chiene. "He asked us to guess the catch," writes Mr Maxwell, "and I guessed 200, but Laurie insisted that the figure was 1200. I must have looked incredulous, for he chaffed me about not accepting his statement. I was writing him a day or two later, and I told him that I had been turning the thing over in my mind, that I would like to compound the matter with him, and that I would be prepared to accept the catch as being 1000 which I thought was a generous offer on my part!" His reply is typical—(the letter was written on April 24th, 1937, the day before his death).

. . . . "To turn to a much more agreeable subject, any such composition as you suggest with regard to the May Island catch would simply be a departure from the facts. Unhappily, 'Honest John' has gone. Hall Chiene is in foreign parts and another eminent Professor who was in the boat has passed on. There remains only George Chiene himself, and as he was only a boy at the

time, I am not sure if he would remember. I am afraid you will have to take my word for it, but if you think that taking 200 off my number is acting generously, I cannot agree. I again assert that there were at least 1200. It really lurks in my mind that there were 1400 but that may be a fisher's memory. However, you ask any of the old residenters if they can remember a handsome young man coming round with a basket of fish and asking them to relieve him of them in the late eighties of last century. I really think I will have to come across and hire a boat and give you ocular demonstration of my powers."

In point of fact the old residenters *do* recollect the miraculous draught, and a postscript from Mr George Chiene, the Professor's grandson, caps the story—"The podleys were caught on home-made flies, made from hair pulled from the tail of Daisy, our white pony, and herring hooks from which the barb was filed off. The point of filing off the barb was that it saved time in unhooking the fish." Further comment would be superfluous.

VIII

It is uncertain whether Laurie had obtained his lay-readership before he threw up his medical studies, but in any case this work which financed

his course at the Theological College was found almost immediately.

He applied to Dr Cazenove, at that time Chancellor of St. Mary's Cathedral and a friend of his father's. An interview was granted, and it was of the utmost importance that a favourable impression should be given. He must appear studious, earnest, mature. The outsider would have seen a slender, attractive looking boy of eighteen, with dark brown hair, and very blue eyes shaded by long black lashes. Albert, looking at himself in the mirror, saw only that he was a boy. This must be remedied. His mother's spectacles lay on the table: they had thick lenses which Albert could hardly see through, but he decided that they added years to his appearance, and so they accompanied him to the interview. Through them he peered anxiously at Dr Cazenove. "Poor boy," said the Chancellor, "what a tragedy for one so young to have to wear glasses!"

Nevertheless, he left with a letter of introduction to the Reverend Reginald Mitchell Innes, who was then living at 12 Melville Crescent. At this interview the spectacles were discarded. Mitchell Innes at once took to Laurie, and Laurie, on his side, admired the vigour and directness of Mitchell Innes.

"Yes, . . . he needed a lay reader . . . . at Old S. Paul's . . . . Would Laurie turn up and read

the lessons at Evensong on Sunday? The Feast of S. Simon and S. Jude . . . ."

Laurie had never been to Old S. Paul's before. He made his way apprehensively into the Vestry, just before service. Mitchell Innes put on his cassock, his surplice, and then—A RED STOLE!

Laurie's heart froze within him. ". . . . Great Scott! . . . ," he said to himself, " is this the kind of place I've come to? "

I

Ironically enough, the red stole which seemed such a danger signal to Laurie had arrived at Old S. Paul's only just before he did. The gift was announced in the Magazine of October, 1885, and the festival of S. Simon and S. Jude falls on the 28th of that month. Indeed, Canon Mitchell Innes seems to have been much more concerned about the advent of the stoles than about obtaining Laurie as lay reader, for no mention of the appointment is made in the November issue, and when the magazine for December appeared, bearing on its cover for the first time the name of Mr A. E. Laurie, the Historical Notice (as the congregational notes were then grandiloquently styled) opened with the words—"We have nothing of interest connected with Old S. Paul's to record this month." In such an unobtrusive manner Laurie began his life-long association with the Canongate.

Compared with the fulness of worship now offered, there can have been little, beyond the stoles, to disquiet Laurie's discreet churchmanship. To Catholic teaching he was no stranger, Catholic

practice was to come gradually; but in 1885 Morning Prayer at eleven and Evening Prayer at seven were still the popular services of the day. There were of course Celebrations of Holy Communion every Sunday at eight, and on the first and third Sundays after Morning Prayer, but the balance of the Communions was overwhelmingly made at the late services, and for many years persistent teaching had to go on before that balance was redressed. The total number of souls attached to the Congregation was well under a thousand, and of these, not two hundred were communicants.

Yet when one considers the history of the immediately preceding period, one wonders that the numbers were so large. In 1842 the Rev. John Alexander, a pioneer of the Oxford Movement in Scotland, was ordained to the charge, and "in this dilapidated chapel, in its dreary, dirty close, we first find the week-day services, the frequent Communions, the chanted psalms, and other privileges which perhaps are not now sufficiently valued by those who never felt the lack."* In spite of his zealous social work, Alexander was severely criticised for his re-introduction of the Scottish Liturgy, and, partly to gain freedom of worship, partly because the chapel was rapidly becoming more dilapidated and the close not only drearier and dirtier but also more

*Mary Ingram, *A Jacobite Stronghold of the Church*, page 100.

disreputable, a great part of the Congregation, headed by their incumbent, moved in 1846 to the newly built S. Columba's in Johnston Terrace, and so sapped the life of the mother church that in a short time the derelict chapel was closed by the orders of the Episcopal Fund Trustees.

After a chequered and unhappy period it was opened again in 1853 for another twenty years. Then the Borough Engineer declared the building unsafe, and the Congregation, once again dispossessed, wandered from one public hall to another, intermittently ministered to by visiting clergy. In 1880 the old chapel was finally demolished, but the Rev. David Smart, of Stuart descent, worked heroically to keep the Congregation together and to plan the rebuilding of the church. Under the wing of the Cathedral Chapter and aided by large grants from the Walker Trust, the first portion, seating about three hundred persons, was completed early in 1883, and was consecrated by Bishop Cotterill on the 27th of January in that year. Almost exactly twelve months later the Rev. Reginald Mitchell Innes entered upon his ministry there, so that when Albert Laurie joined the staff as lay reader in 1885, he came to a building not yet three years old and to a Congregation that had been homeless and scattered for ten years before that: the very name, Old S. Paul's, had only been sanctioned by the Dean and Chapter the January before he arrived.

But the tradition of tenacious loyalty—" Honour gars ye "—had been preserved as a strong foundation by the Rev. David Smart, and in Reginald Mitchell Innes and Albert Ernest Laurie the Congregation was to find itself served yet again by two magnificent master builders.

II

Information is scanty with regard to life at the Theological College in those days, but it would seem that, beyond attending lectures, Laurie took little part in it. He was living at home, and whatever spare time he had, he spent in work at Old S. Paul's. Originally established as part of Trinity College, Glenalmond, the Theological faculty had now moved to Nos. 8 and 9 Rosebery Crescent, from the windows of which the scholars looked enviously across at Coates Hall, soon to be their new home. There was accommodation at this time for barely a dozen students. The drawing-room in No. 9 served as a lecture room, and the chapel, where daily offices were said, was a converted cloak room. The Principal, Dr Keating, was affectionately known as " Pan," an appropriate name for one upon whose shoulders rested the responsibility of shepherding the students and of instructing them in (almost) " all " subjects. There was no Vice-Principal, but Bishop

Dowden visited the College to lecture in History, Dean Montgomerie in Pastoralia, the Rev. W. Rollo in Hebrew, and Dr Collinson in Music. Recreation in those days was limited to boating on the canal, and to tennis, either on a covered court in the city or on Bishop's Dowden's private lawn.

Although he was awarded the Luscombe Scholarship in his final year, Laurie was not distinguished as a student. Already it was his single mindedness and devotion that won admiration and affection among the other men: it is clear that he was popular, that the students were glad to go with him to Old S. Paul's, and were happy to welcome him in their studies whenever, after his ordination, he revisited the College. But enquiry has revealed no pranks, no tradition of carrying all before him in the lecture room and on the playing field, no legend of piety above the ordinary, such material as warms the imagination and quickens the pen of the biographer.

Rather we must picture him walking up from 3 Cambridge Place, Pilrig, or 4 Dalmeny Street, or 1 Dalmeny Road, Bonnington—the various addresses to which he and his family respectively moved between 1885 and 1890—on some Sunday morning when October laid a frosty haze over the City. At his side walks his sister, Janet, so completely his companion then and in after life that one described them as the Lock and the Key. The hour is early and the sharpness of the air has not quite banished sleep

from her eyes. So they play a little game together: Albert puts his arm round her shoulder, covering her with his big Inverness cape, she leans her head against him and closes her eyes—" I'm going to sleep now for three lamp posts," then the fun of guessing when the third post was past, and then Albert would go to sleep in his turn, and the long climb of the hill would be magically spirited away.

At Old S. Paul's we may be sure that Laurie made friends and won souls from the very beginning, yet it is quite impossible to reconstruct his activities there during his lay readership in any detail. He is mentioned as having been present, along with the Incumbent and Mr Churchwarden Isles, at Rosebank Cemetery at the funeral of a chorister, Andrew Vallery, " a quiet, well-conducted boy " of ten. The other choir boys, vested in cassocks and surplices, also attended the funeral, to sing the hymn " When our heads are bowed with woe," and to lay a floral cross on the grave of their companion. Later it bectme known that Mrs Vallery gave 1s. 10d. to Canon Mitchell Innes, being the amount saved by her son towards the purchase of bells for the church. No bell was bought until the Warriors' Chapel was built, but we see that the spirit of sacrifice was strong, even among children, in those early days of the re-established Congregation.

This funeral took place in May 1886, and for over two years there is no mention of Mr Laurie, or his

doings, in the church magazine. But in September 1888 we hear him, as Vice-President of a newly formed boys' cricket club, appealing for members. The season, of course, was almost over, and the following month the club closed down to revive again the next year under Mr Laurie's tutelage with a whole First XI and half of a second, playing—and winning—matches on Saturday afternoons on the West Meadows.

Needless to say there were entertainments in winter and outings in summer. Social evenings, soirées, tableaux vivants, lime light transparencies, gymnastic displays, concerts, all had their place in the life of the Congregation, while in the tripping season we read that Mr Laurie accompanied parties in sun or in shower to Longniddry or Newhailes, Bonally or Port Edgar. To us, half a century later, there is definitely something "period" in the very phrasing which describes such events, and, if only to recapture a bygone fragance, we let these four Victorian Vignettes speak for themselves.

SPRING: The Annual Social Meeting.

This Meeting was held in the Church Room, on Thursday, 8th May, and the evening passed off most successfully. The tea was good, as it always is, when prepared by the experienced hand of Miss Thomson. There was an admirable Musical Programme provided by Mr Ingram, and by no means the smallest

attraction in the programme was this, that our own Choir were the largest and most frequent performers in it, and all present showed a keen appreciation of their music. Canon Murdoch gave a most useful and amusing address upon the importance and value of family life . . . . A most graceful and enjoyable entertainment with Indian Clubs was given by Mr Michael Bruce, which called forth rounds of applause. The evening was altogether one of the most enjoyable of those which we have attended.

SUMMER: (1) The Sunday School Trip.

Tuesday, 21st July, being the day fixed for the Sunday School Trip, the children, with their teachers, Mr Forsyth-Grant, Superintendent, and Rev. Mr Laurie, left the Waverley Station by 10.30 train for Longniddry, that being again the place chosen. The day, though dull, was fair, and continued so until after we had dinner at the seashore. The party had dispersed to enjoy themselves, when soon after the sky became overcast, and in a few minutes a thunder storm broke over us. All now came flocking together, to get what shelter could be got from cloaks, umbrellas, etc., but the rain came down in torrents, and we were all alike drenched. We had to stand until the rain abated somewhat; and it was then found that if we started at once we might get an early train home. So we set out for the Station, but fresh trouble awaited us, a part of the road was

flooded by the heavy rain to the depth of two or three feet, seeing this, many of the younger children began to cry; but go through we must, there was no other way, so teachers and bigger boys had to wade back and forward through the water piloting and carrying the children across. The condition of all was rendered worse than ever by this mishap, and we feared we would lose the train, but fortunately we were in time. Arriving in Edinburgh, we made our way to the Church Room, where the children were counted, and greatly to the relief of the teachers, and brothers and sisters, not one of our party was amissing. Of course the children were speedily dismissed, that they might receive at home the much needed attention to prevent any ill resulting to their health from the drenching they had got. In our hasty retreat from the seashore, we had to leave Mr Edmond with all our baggage, and tea bread, milk, etc.; and he came with a later train bringing it all with him. Next morning the majority of the children assembled, and got their damp tea bread and the milk. It was a relief to the teachers who came next morning to see so many of the children apparently none the worse for the disasters of the Trip Day.

SUMMER: (2) Sunday School Excursion.

This year the party went to Butlaw Woods, Port Edgar, arriving there about 11.30. The day being

bright and sunny, all were in the highest spirits. After resting a little on a grassy slope, dinner was served, and then arrangements made for the day's amusement. The Incumbent and Mr Laurie, with most of the boys, went off for cricket and football. The girls, with their teachers, found enjoyment gathering wild flowers (of which there was abundance) or playing by the seashore, and there was also a swing and skipping rope for their amusement. At 4 o'clock all reassembled for tea; after which were races. At 5.30 the company had to form into marching order for the return home, much to the regret of the children, who were in the height of their enjoyment amid the bright sunshine, the beautiful woods, and flowers. All got back safely to Old S. Paul's from whence they were dismissed by the Incumbent. No mishap occurred, and all enjoyed a very happy day.

WINTER: The Temperance Meetings.

Miss Gamgee has kindly provided the music for Wednesday 8th [January, 1887] of which the following is the programme:—

Pianoforte Duett: "The Blue Bells of Scotland" —
Miss Ainslie and Miss Gamgee.
Song: "What do the Angels dream of, Mother?"
Gounod
Miss L. Henderson.

Pianoforte Solo:	"Mazurka"	*Schulhoff*
	Miss Ainslie.	
Vocal Duett:	"Una Sera d'amore"	*Campana*
	The Misses Henderson.	
Reading		———
	Miss Taylor.	
Pianoforte:	"Tarantella"	*Heller*
Vocal Duett:	"Maying"	———
	Mr and Miss Henderson.	
Pianoforte Duett:		
	Descriptive Piece, "Jessie's Dream; or, The Relief of Lucknow."	———

One might gather that in spite of the concluding item this was somewhat too temperate an entertainment for the Society, for the following month the programme consisted almost entirely of "Comic Songs" and "Humorous Scotch Readings" by Messrs Nixon, Byers and McLachlan. This, again, may hardly have been sober enough, for in February the usual amusement meeting was cancelled.

III

On Lady Day, 25th March 1890, in St. Mary's Cathedral, Laurie was ordained deacon by Dr Dowden, Bishop of the Diocese. How much it must have meant to him, and with what complete and

utter self-surrender he received his orders, we can well imagine. In so much as his sweet and patient nature could have chafed, he must have longed for the end of his four years' apprenticeship, and for the opportunity of serving God as an ordained minister. And now the inevitability of Providence held something more for him: during these years of his lay readership a deep friendship and understanding sprang up between him and Mitchell Innes. As Timothy to Paul, so was Laurie a spiritual son and heir to his Rector, and when the time came, he was offered his title at Old S. Paul's. To us, who know the end of the story, it seems unbelievable that Laurie might have gone elsewhere, yet his predecessor in office, Mr C. Drysdale, also a Theological Student, found his curacy at another church. But as though a mystic wedding had already been solemnised with the Congregation, Laurie remained.

Priesthood came, less than a year later, at the hands of the Bishop of Glasgow. The date was St. Matthias' Day, 24th February, and never once as the anniversary came round did Laurie forget the significance of the feast—the election of one into the place of a traitor. "Grant that Thy Church, being alway preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors." Only those who knew him intimately realised with what a genuine fear he prayed against his own falsity and infidelity. At least once every year he re-affirmed his

ordination vows, and he committed to memory large portions of the Bishop's exhortation. "Have therefore always printed in your remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to your charge . . . . And if it shall happen the same Church, or any member thereof, to take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue." Knox, Calvin, not even Luther himself, could have uttered the words with a more pregnant impressiveness than did Laurie to his deacons.

As the gate of the altar rail in St. Mary's Cathedral closed behind him, Laurie knew, what many another priest has known too, that his life was no longer his own, that he was set apart, aloof, even anonymous in his service of God, a Voice crying in the wilderness, content to be no more than a voice so long as the message was God's. And so from now on, in one sense, he ceased to have any personal life of his own. He no longer belonged to himself, and yet he belonged to everybody; and in his hours of seclusion and withdrawal he sought more and more to belong to God. In that unconditional surrender he found the full stature of his manhood, but it was a growth that cannot be described or written down. *Si monumentum requieris* . . . . (though Laurie would have shrunk humbly from Wren's epitaph) . . . . *Circumspice.* But with the eyes of the spirit as well as with the eyes of sense. Old S. Paul's, its

fabric, its furnishing, the ordering of its worship, the numerous social organisations, these are indeed his monument, and these we can enumerate and chronicle. But his memorial in the hearts of his people, the long and secret story of mourners comforted, of sinners reclaimed, of the unfaithful strengthened, the friendless befriended, the prisoner visited, the poor relieved, that story in its fulness of self-sacrifice is only known to God. Each member of his flock knows a fragment of it, but the whole is hid with Christ in God.

What is possible for us to grasp of his life is for the next few years inextricably bound up with the development of Old S. Paul's, and in particular with two missions and two extensions of the actual building.

IV

The new church completed in 1883 was situated higher up the close, now docked short by Jeffrey Street, than the old Chapel. The east end (actually north, from a geographical point of view) must have presented substantially the same appearance from the outside as it does now—the same high gable, pierced by three lancet windows, the same three empty bell niches at the top. The interior, however, was vastly different: from the floor to the peak of the roof was the full fifty-seven feet that it is at present, but

the nave was extremely truncated, running back from the sanctuary only the distance of the first three pilasters, so that the edifice has been described as resembling a match box turned on end. The chancel was only six inches higher than the nave, and the magnificent reredos, with its painted and gilded triptych, was not in existence, nor were the present carved choir stalls. A box-like pulpit stood where the lectern now stands. What is now the Warriors' Chapel housed the Clergy vestry, while the Choir robed down in the Hall and gained the sanctuary by an inside stair. A tiny organ, believed to have been given by Queen Anne, supplied the music, and between the hideous yellow pitch pine choir stalls the floor of the chancel was covered by dingy brown cork linoleum. The pilasters were built later to bear the increased weight of the roof, and the string course added as a pure embellishment. Excluding the sanctuary, the body o' the kirk was thus less than half the length it now is. The building was lit by gas; a careful examination of the south wall reveals the position of the brackets and piping.

Various gifts to beautify the church had already been received: the chancel windows had been given; a sanctuary lamp had been put up; a new organ, costing £600, had been installed. But the actual extension now made to the building was simple enough, consisting of the addition of four more bays to the existing three, thus bringing the total length

of the church up to 110 feet, and doubling its seating capacity.

About the time of Laurie's ordination to the diaconate, services were interrupted by the work, but worship was resumed on Palm Sunday, and on Friday, 6th June (1890), the Benedictory Service and formal re-opening was performed by the Bishop. The day began with a celebration of Holy Communion at 7 a.m. at which, apparently, linen vestments were used for the first time. The crowded Festal Evensong was attended by a good number of Clergy; the Anthem was Elvey's setting of Psalm CXXII, "I was glad when they said unto me," and then came the Benedictory portion of the Service, the opening sentences of which seemed specially appropriate to Old S. Paul's:—

BISHOP: I will return and will build again the Tabernacle of David, which is fallen down.

CHOIR: And will build again the ruins thereof.

The Rev. E. J. Gough, Incumbent of S. Paul's, Dundee, preached the sermon, which we are told was eloquent, on the text Ezra V, verse 2—"Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them."

The extended building pleased so much that it was decided to press on at once with the improvement of the sanctuary. The level of the floor was raised, the brown linoleum replaced by marble, and the pitch pine benches by the present carved stalls; a new pulpit was given, and so was the work in the Baptistery. All this was accomplished within the next year and a half. The elaborate reredos, in the style of late XVth century Gothic, was completed in 1896.

Other gifts—communion vessels, altar crosses and candlesticks, coloured silk vestments, and so on, too numerous to mention, made their contribution to the beauty of worship during these years, and when we remember that Lauder House was built (and later given to the church) and that the Mission was opened in the Canongate, we can appreciate the magnitude of the work accomplished under the inspiring leadership of Canon Mitchell Innes.

Step by step with the material advance went also progress in the spiritual life of the Congregation. During the summer of 1892 a Ten Days' Mission to the City churches was planned, and the missioner allocated to Old S. Paul's was Father Hall, of the Society of St. John the Evangelist. The choice was happy: Father Hall was one of the most distinguished of the Cowley men, and a few years later was released by his Order to become Bishop of Vermont in the United States. In September he

came to preach at Old S. Paul's, to familiarise himself with the needs of the Congregation, and to talk over preliminary arrangements. A systematic preparation was inaugurated: a band of visitors went from house to house with literature, special choirs were formed and trained, instructions were given from the pulpit and in the church magazine, intercessions were offered from Sunday to Sunday. The keynotes of preparation were three—self-examination, prayer and expectation. "Earnest self-examination and prayer," wrote Mitchell Innes, "can hardly be maintained without there springing up in the heart a lively expectation. Believe that you are to receive a blessing, and look forward to the Mission as the opportunity for receiving that blessing and you will receive it. God says, 'Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.' That looking forward, with longing, desire, expectation, and faith is 'the opening of the mouth wide.' Many promises are made to expectant faith—'according to thy faith be it unto thee:' 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' Prepare yourselves then, by these three means . . . . and you will not go away empty from the Mission."

At last the 29th of January—Septuagesima Sunday—arrived. The church was crowded, the atmosphere electric. The entry of Father Hall was unforgettable—tall, powerfully built, features by nature handsome chiselled to a finer spirituality by austerity. His

beautiful voice bound the Congregation in a spell. Day by day for the next ten days men and women thronged the church. Because many started work at six o'clock in the morning, the first service was held at five, when a series of addresses was given on prayer. Even at that hour crowds packed the church, and many were able to stay on for the celebration of Holy Communion which followed.

From one to two in the afternoon were meetings for men, and from three to four, for women, at which instruction was given on Repentance—simple, direct and practical addresses on self-examination, on sin, on confession. The Children's Service was at five, and at eight in the evening the church was again crowded for the Mission Service. Father Hall began each of his sermons by repeating the lines:—

> "Sow a thought and you reap an act,
> Sow an act and you reap a habit,
> Sow a habit and you reap a character,
> Sow a character and you reap a destiny."

One who heard him says that these words haunted like a refrain, they were so impressive as to be unforgettable.

It is hardly necessary to add that the results of this Mission were both extensive and profound. The spiritual life of individual members of the Congregation was deepened amazingly, and larger numbers presented themselves for the Confirmation Class. By

no means the least influenced was Laurie himself: for him also the Mission was a stirring spiritual experience, leading to a sincere renewal of all his religious vows; furthermore, he learned from it so aptly that eight years later he was able to instigate another Mission with wonderful results; he learned also to love and admire the type of character fostered at Cowley, and was thus drawn into a life-long and significant association with the Society of St. John the Evangelist.

V

From time to time we get more personal glimpses of Laurie during this period. After his ordination, he left home and moved into lodgings at 31 Jeffrey Street. As the Congregation increased, the appointment of a second assistant was necessary and the Rev. William Perry joined the staff. Laurie and the future Dean of Edinburgh at once formed a fast friendship. Already Sunday evening supper at Lauder House had become an institution, and when the two young men started homewards, Laurie would accompany Perry to his rooms in Forrest Road, and then, the argument or discussion still unresolved, Perry would walk back to Jeffrey Street. Then Laurie must see Perry safely home again, and frequently the clock on the Tron Church would be

striking the small hours before they finally separated. They also, when it was possible, shared holidays; for example, a first visit to London, when the two young Scotsmen set earnestly about improving their education with the least possible outlay. This consisted in walking the streets of London to visit the celebrated churches, a veritable Wren pilgrimage, conducted so economically that funds enabled them to go in the evening to the Savoy Theatre. Sir Henry Lytton was then at the beginning of his career, and Laurie, who had a gift for picking up a melody, quickly learned both words and music, and considerably embarrassed his Aberdonian friend by singing them loudly in the London streets. Gilbert and Sullivan remained a life-long passion. A few years before his death he went to drink a friendly glass with a young couple whom he was to marry the following day. As he left, he gave them two books in a neat cardboard box. A brief inspection revealed gilt edges and black morocco binding. The young man said, "How nice of him! He's given us each a Prayer Book." The Prayer Books turned out to be editions de luxe of the Bab Ballads and the Savoy Operas.

Before long Laurie was venturing farther afield—to Paris, where he discovered in himself the makings of a true boulevardier. "My idea of a holiday," he remarked many years later, "is to sit at a table on the Boule' Miche', or in a hotel lounge, with a little

drink in front of me, and watch people go up and down."

In fairness we must also say that he found his way to Oxford, and delighted in the silent fellowship of the Mission House in Marston Street. The city of dreaming spires was an enchanted world to the young man, avid for beauty, quickly stirred by a sense of tradition. But as he climbed the steep stairs with their leaden treads, and pushed open the door of the little house chapel, with its creaking stalls and dingy brown paint, he knelt before the Blessed Sacrament and entered a world yet more precious than the Gothic dream of the city below. Always, at work or on holiday, God mattered most.

We hear of him also as the popular leader of the Boys' Bible Class—so popular that they were giving him presents on every possible occasion. He threw himself with energy into the attempt of Trinity College, Glenalmond, to found a school mission in association with Old S. Paul's. Premises were obtained in North Gray's Close, and various educational and athletic organisations flourished for a time and then, like so much other work for boys, languished and died. A master, reported to be "excruciatingly funny," came to lecture on public school life and to illustrate his talk with lantern slides. Laurie and a party of young men paid a return visit to Glenalmond, remarking, with humour either unconscious or barbed, that they were lucky,

on passing through Perth, to find the Cathedral unlocked.

In October 1897, William Perry was appointed Vice-Principal of the Theological College, and Canon Mitchell Innes was nominated by Bishop Dowden to fill the post of Sub Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral. The double loss struck Old S. Paul's hard, and a petition, signed by the Churchwardens, Vestrymen, Sidesmen and Communicants, was sent both to the Rector and to the Bishop, asking for a reversal of the decision about the Sub Deanery. But Mitchell Innes had given over thirteen years of very strenuous work to the Congregation, and felt that the time had come for him to move on. The Cathedral, too, had only recently been built, and the Bishop knew it could not create its proper influence in the diocese unless served by men of first rate ability. So the decision stood.

At this time Laurie had only been in Priest's Orders for six years, yet so sure was Mitchell Innes of his spiritual maturity that he recommended him to the Dean and Chapter for the vacancy. Once again the inevitability of Providence was at work, and on the 29th October 1897, Albert Ernest Laurie was unanimously elected Rector of Old S. Paul's. The announcement was made "with the utmost satisfaction and thankfulness."

Nevertheless, many in the Congregation doubted the wisdom of the choice: Laurie was only thirty-one,

and had been long enough in the Congregation to become a familiar prophet among his own people. He, himself, was fully aware of the responsibility. "Those of you who were present at the Service of Institution," he wrote, "will feel with me that our new relationship toward one another is a great reality, that as the Church then, through her chief officer the Bishop, solemnly entrusted the Congregation to my charge, so the reality (one might almost say the awful reality) of our relationship is only measured by this fact, that I am set to watch for your souls as one who must give account to Our Lord Himself. It is no light burden this—it comes to me quite unlooked for, quite unsought, and as I believe, from God Himself. I take it up, not without recognition of the grave responsibility, but also with this great hope, that it may be at last for the glory of God, that we may together grow more diligent in His service and worship until He calls us severally to lay aside our tasks and make answer to Him. You will see how much I need your prayers, your sympathy, your help. I am glad to think how very largely I have them all already. I ask each one of you now not to forget in your prayers and in your needs—as I, too, hope always to remember—that I am sent to you as an 'Ambassador for God and your servant for Jesus' sake.'"

The sense of responsibility deepened with years. In 1925, offering a curacy to one of his previous

confirmation candidates, he wrote from Switzerland, "I have just come from Italy and have been much with the black shirts and disciples of Mussolini. Their devotion reminds me of the old followers of Garibaldi, before Cavour had made a united Italy. I can't remember with any exactness what were the words of Garibaldi's appeal to young Italy, but the substance of the appeal was that he could offer no money and no advancement, that all he could guarantee was wounds and possible death and a share in the freeing of Italy; he ended with the words "Come and suffer."* You know how young Italy responded.

"You give your youth, your prospects, your whole future for the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Christ. You will get a sufficient competence always, but there is no security that you will get more. You will have drudgery upon drudgery to undertake, you will get disappointment after disappointment from those to whom you strive to give most of yourself. You will have to face agonies of suffering in the bodies and minds of others with a steady calmness and an unfailing conviction of an over-ruling Love. You will have periods of weariness both of body and soul, when the assaults of doubt and depression and apparent futility will be all but overwhelming.

*The words "Come and suffer" are attributed to Mazzini, as A. E. L. himself knew, for he quoted them in a letter in the Magazine of November, 1903. Garibaldi's words appealed to him greatly and he quoted them often.

But in all such moments you will be able to cast yourself upon your vocation. If others have their certainties, so also have you. "Nay, but Thou did'st call me"—called me by the varied influences of home, called me by the slow growth of conviction at the University, called me with definite direction at my confirmation, called me through my title to Old S. Paul's, and lastly called me by the solemn choice of your Holy Church with the imposition of the Apostles' hands.

"That is one side; there is another, but it's not so easy to state. In my own experience it is this—a growing conviction of being gripped by the hand of God, amounting at times to a joy of conscious union which is inexpressible in words, a steadily growing sense of understanding of life and comprehension of its purpose, growing and spreading like the dawn, illumining in turn the facts, until all grows into a complete whole. And along with this, accompanying it fitfully indeed, but in increasing recurrence and power, as you learn more and more to surrender "all" to Him and to "put all things under His feet," a blessed and glorious sense, not only of the truth of Christ as the Light of the World, but as lighting your own soul with a personal consciousness of Himself . . . . Well, are you willing?"

This letter is as complete a biography of Laurie as will ever be written. With humility, yet with conviction, he himself had answered "I am willing"

and in that spirit of utter dependence upon God he was instituted as Rector of Old S. Paul's at Evensong on the first Sunday after the Epiphany, the 9th January, 1898.

VI

A year and a half before Laurie's induction a second extension of the church had been mooted. Those who doubted his capacity to fill Mitchell Innes's place with adequacy now suggested the abandonment of the scheme, the return of the money, or its diversion to some other work. But they had not judged their man. A meeting had been held in November 1896 and the minute makes interesting reading; Mr Kincaid Mackenzie (later Lord Mackenzie, one of Laurie's greatest friends) was in the chair, and a motion was made " to accept the grant of £200 a year for six years voted by The Walker Trustees, in aid of additional buildings, on the understanding that the Congregation pledge themselves to use their utmost endeavour to raise a similar sum yearly." Others, including the Vestry Clerk and the Treasurer, opposed it on the grounds " that they should be careful in taking a step, which meant steady self denial, unless they were really prepared perseveringly to carry it out." Such a challenge could not go unanswered. " Mr Laurie,"

states the minute, succinctly, " Mr Laurie spoke on the side of entering the scheme."

The response had been good, and, now that he was Rector, he felt himself more than ever pledged to carry the work through. Keeping his own counsel, he dreamed his dreams of what he wanted done, and when eventually he disclosed them, after consultation with the architect, Mitchell Innes himself applauded their vision and daring.

But spiritual building came first. Although year by year the Congregation was being increased by fifty, seventy, eighty, even ninety communicants, the very magnitude of the increase disquieted Laurie, and he determined to plan a second mission which took place in Advent 1901, eight years after the previous one. An earlier date had originally been in his mind, but one thing after another postponed it, particularly the depletion of the staff. E. T. S. Reid, later to become successively Bishop of Glasgow and Bishop of St. Andrews, left Old S. Paul's in 1900 to work at the Cathedral; Ranald Macpherson went a few months later, and Cappell was only a deacon. James Beale, in a curacy in Newcastle, had been appointed, but delayed his arrival from month to month, so that Laurie continued shorthanded, and was hampered still further by a serious cycling accident on Castle Terrace. Beale eventually passed his Priest's Examination and appeared during the summer of 1901, so that arrangements for the

mission could go forward—arrangements very similar to those described in connection with Father Hall's visit. On this occasion the Missioners were Canon Mitchell Innes and the Rev. Anthony Mitchell, later to become Principal of the Theological College and Bishop of St. Andrews. Laurie's own account, written a few days later, tells the story memorably: "It will be long before we are able to measure the good done—indeed, never will it be completely grasped, so widespread and so various has been its influence . . . . Yet there are certain great and measurable results left behind; and I put first that which I believe will be the most lasting, our greater sense of dependence upon God. For, after all, it cannot be that human agency will account for all that has taken place. The fervid eloquence of the Missioners; the extraordinary nature of the services; the carefulness of the preparation; all have been so clearly inadequate to account for the totally unexpected results, that we can ascribe it to nothing but God's direct blessing in answer to our prayers. If Old S. Paul's people have learnt nothing else by the mission, surely they have learnt to have faith in prayer. Not useless were these memorable Tuesday nights in the Autumn and Winter; not useless that remarkable twenty-four hours before the mission began, with its group after group of earnest intercederers in constant succession, both day and night . . . ."

"Some features of the work specially deserve to be recorded, and not least the entirely unexpected success of the outdoor work. Probably few of those who, in obedience to the strong conviction of the Senior Missioner, took part in this movement, had great hopes of its having any deep influence, and some there were of us, who were obedient to the call, while inwardly questioning the wisdom of the method. But the success has been real and great. Once the plunge had been made and the principle conceded, it was remarkable to note that, however unattractive such unwonted work was to us, the impression upon both worker and district was all for good. Personally I was not without dread of harming rather than advancing our influence in the district, but the fears were dispelled as night after night passed. From the first I believe that the people saw that we were not making any demonstration to attract attention to ourselves, but to call them to God; and the reverence, deepening at times to awe, with which the procession was received was remarkable. It will live long in the memory of some of us—the quiet crowd on both sides of the historic Canongate, with its memories of old religious demonstrations so fateful for the Church; the long white-robed procession in the picturesque light of the flaming torches, and the body of all classes and ages, 'a goodly number, men and boys, the matron and the maid,' who followed in their train, all headed by the

great Cross, which, perhaps more than anything else, was the chief factor in the production of the reverent attitude of the onlookers. Who that were present will ever forget the wonderful effect upon the mind of the chanting of the Litany in solemn progress round the district, especially as the procession passed the old walls of the Abbey which long ages ago re-echoed to the same great entreaties, unheard till then for over three hundred years? That the effect was wholly good is shown in the fact that no single adverse criticism from any outside source has reached me: while a list of about two hundred names has been obtained entirely in our own district, whom we shall hope, as we are able, by means of S. Saviour's and the Church, to bring nearer to God, Who so evidently inspired, guided, and blessed the efforts . . . . The result cannot fail to be of great value, both now and hereafter, to the district and the Congregation."

VII

Laurie's faith in regard to the extension of the Church was justified. In 1902 he was able to announce that all the money necessary had been collected. Canon Mitchell Innes had already bought and given the property in North Gray's Close—and incidently, the generosity of this man and of his aunt, Miss Cornelia Dick Lauder, is something for

which Old S. Paul's should be eternally grateful. Everything was ready for building; the plans were passed by the Dean of Guild and were exhibited in the Vestry. They provided, not merely for the continuation of the nave, but for the erection of the side chapel, and for the transference of the choir vestry to the first floor of the buildings in North Gray's Close. Anyone who has ever attended a service in Old S. Paul's will remember how impressive was the entrance of the choir: the sound of the brief anthem of preparation drifted down into the church and then the choristers formed up beside the Crucifer along the high gallery under the west window, and came slowly down the steps and up the aisle—an entrance so stately and beautiful that the mind was at once attuned to worship.

Work on this scheme began in May 1904 and the following August Mitchell Innes came to lay the memorial stone of the Lady (or Seabury) Chapel. The clergy and choir grouped themselves under the wooden scaffolding, Mr Churchwarden Maxwell presented the customary vessel containing coins, documents, and so on, to be placed in the cavity below, and Mitchell Innes blessed the stone, and, in co-operation with deeply interested and helpful workmen, performed the various masonic acts.

The extension of the building provided an opportunity for making other gifts to the Church—oak screening for the choir-stalls in the sanctuary,

stairs and a canopy for the pulpit, the altar and reredos and aumbry, with other appointments for the new chapel, such as credence table, altar book, and stained glass windows.

During October a heavy blow fell on the Congregation: James Beale, the beloved and saintly assistant priest fell ill and died. For years there had been many ties between his family and Old S. Paul's. His father, Rector of Duns, had helped at the Mission of 1892, and in return, the Congregation played the part of godmother to his dependent chapel of St. Ebba's, at Eyemouth, for a number of years. His son's appointment to the staff at Old S. Paul's proved an excellent one: ever afterwards James Beale and Charles Meister remained in Laurie's memory as the ideal types of priest, and he spoke of them in a way which showed what symbols of self-sacrifice they had become to him. James's death, then, caused widespread grief, and for a moment both Rector and people lost heart about their new buildings. But only for a moment: "When one remembers how much the opening of the new Church meant to Mr Beale," wrote Laurie, "it at first sight seems as if 'it won't be the same without him.' Yet, probably, this is quite contrary to the real truth. It is in no mere religious platitude, or with a feeble attempt to ignore the great fact, that I say it will mean all the more now to him, and therefore ought to mean all the more to us." And

so the work went on, until it was possible to announce that the new buildings would be ready for consecration at the Dedication Festival, 25th January, 1905. Laurie tells the story so well that it would be an impertinence to rewrite it in other words: "It has been to me," he says, "a triumph of the Congregational patience, perseverance, and devotion. Only once in all this time was one service stopped, and that only at the end, when the electricians invaded the chancel, and there was for the moment no place left for the Congregation. It is a real delight to remember some of those days—never once has the Holy Sacrifice ceased to be offered—never once, whatever the cold, noise, dust, or discomfort, has there been lacking the faithful few who represented their brethren in pleading for the Congregation and the world the Great Offering of Christ's Holy Catholic Church. Sometimes it was very strange—the blows of the hammer spacing out the story of the Passion; the shout of busy workmen breaking the wonted stillness of the Holy Presence; but it has never failed, and with Matins and Evensong and their little congregations, the daily official praise and worship of the Congregation has never been interrupted save once, on one day, at one Service . . . .

"There are memories of the narrowed Church, with its dense darkness and the strange effect of the Crucifix in the east window suspended in mid-air

amid the surrounding blackness, memories which have knit themselves into our spiritual experience. Who will forget the midnight vigils in November, with the still form in the church? Or the solemn, pathetic reverence of the Choral Eucharist in the crowded church, with the workmen against the hoarding at the back? Or the sense of realised fellowship which the wooden partition forced upon us when, crowded together, we overflowed into chancel and stairs, on the morning of which we thought of one 'set among us like a little child?' Those are all inseparable from the time. God 'setteth in pain the jewel of his joy.'

"Twice postponed, at last the great day came. How happy the postponement was we had not realised until the double significance of the Dedication Festival and the Dedication of the Buildings broke upon us. But nothing could have fallen out more appropriately, and most of us must have felt this as we gathered for the first Festival Evensong on the eve of S. Paul's Day, and took as our motto of our Feast, 'I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake . . . .'

"S. Paul's Day began with the hushed stillness of the 5 o'clock Eucharist, with no sound of workmen to break the unusual calm, and throughout the day, at all the services, the atmosphere grew more tense until Evensong came. Then, when everything that loving hands could do to make 'the place of His

feet glorious' had been done—floors and chairs scrubbed, furniture dusted (and such dust it was!), the walls fumigated and sweetened with fragrant incense—at last all was ready.

" Admission to the service was by ticket, and these were eagerly sought for, so that the seating capacity was taxed to the utmost, between seven hundred and eight hundred probably being present.

" The Bishop was received on his arrival by the Church Lads' Brigade under Captain More Nisbet, and conducted to the Vestry in North Gray's Close, after which, the lads of the Brigade lined the route of the outdoor procession. The service began with a procession of the Choir and Clergy, followed by representatives of all the various organisations of the Congregation, to meet the Bishop and conduct him to the Church. Arrived at North Gray's Close, the lay procession divided its ranks to allow the Choristers and Clergy, with the Bishop, to pass through, then closed up behind, and, headed by the Mission Cross, followed the Bishop round the Church. During this solemn progress, familiar portions of the Litany were sung, and were heartily responded to.

" Inside the Church, the great congregation, with one common impulse, knelt as the distant responses of the Litany were heard, and in absolute silence made their secret prayers to God for His blessing on the Service; and very richly were their prayers answered.

"Arrived in Carrubber's Close, the choir divided its ranks, and, headed by the Mission Cross, the lay procession solemnly entered the church to take possession officially in the name of the Congregation. The effect was unconsciously dramatic. First came the Mission Cross, followed by representatives of S. Saviour's agencies; then the various agencies of Old S. Paul's, bearing their Guild Banners, etc., concluding with the two Churchwardens; then, headed by the jewelled Cross and white-robed Choir, came the Clergy and the Bishop. Most inspiring it was amid the many voices of the great congregation singing the grand hymn, 'At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow,' to note the long significant procession in its progress to the Chancel. Many of the city clergy were present, and of the former clergy of Old S. Paul's, Canon Meredith, a former Incumbent, Canon Mitchell Innes and the Reverends R. Macpherson, E. T. S. Reid, and J. L. Cappell. Evensong was sung to the third collect, and then the Benediction Service proper commenced. First the Veni Creator was sung kneeling, and then the Bishop and his Chaplain, accompanied by the Rector, passed down the church for the Benediction of the additions to the nave, which takes the form of a Baptistery—the Congregation devoutly kneeling. From the Baptistery, the Bishop passed into the Side Chapel, where, at the new altar, the Benediction Service was completed. The Congregation had been requested to

remain kneeling in order to dedicate their lives to God at the moment when the new buildings were dedicated, and the fervour of their devotion was evident in the solemn stillness which prevailed during this portion of the service. Then came the climax of the service, when, with Choir and Clergy before the Altar, the Te Deum Laudamus was sung with solemn earnestness and holy joy. Then followed the sermon in the old, familiar, much-loved voice of him who had faith to start the scheme which had now found its conclusion; and then the Benediction and Processional Hymn out of Church . . . . So it was all over—a night to be much remembered of the Lord—the beginning of a new epoch in the long history of Old S. Paul's."

I

The long history of Old S. Paul's came to matter more and more to Laurie during these years. Always susceptible to both "tradition" and "atmosphere," (it is remarkable how frequent was his use of this latter word), he now rejoiced as a giant in the heritage that was his Congregation's. He coined the motto "honour gars ye" as the idiomatic equivalent of Noblesse Oblige, and it became a real rallying cry, while Stuart associations proved a treasure house of spiritual stimulus. One is tempted to quote at length from the admirable history published by Miss Mary Ingram under the title, *A Jacobite Stronghold of the Church,* but the danger of being too digressive must be avoided. Nevertheless, some knowledge of the tradition is necessary for an understanding of Laurie's attitude, and, without encroaching upon what has already been written, it may be useful to select from the synopses of a Programme of Twelve Historical Tableaux staged in the Church Hall during February 1908, so that we may have at least a slender summary of the main events.

The first scene represented Agnes de Careboris, the widow and legatee of the owner of Carrubber's Close, conveying to the Church in 1491, the title deeds of this property. Revenue accruing from the estate was to be devoted to masses for the souls of her late husband, William Careboris, and James III. This offering was made at the altar of St. Andrew in North Berwick, the widow Agnes having found a second husband in Robert Lauder of The Bass. It is an interesting coincidence that the original site was repurchased for the Church, after centuries of diverted appropriation, by Mrs Ramsay of Edinburgh (Beatrice Dick Lauder) a lineal descendant of Agnes.

From 1491 the scene moves in a stride to 1688—the death knell of the Establishment of the Scottish Church. Alexander Rose, Bishop of Edinburgh, is presented interviewing William of Orange at Whitehall in the hope of winning his favour for the Establishment. However, as a loyal upholder of the Stuarts, in answer to William's enquiries he can only promise " I will serve you as far as law, reason and conscience will permit." The blunt reply, naturally enough, displeased William, so we next see Bishop Rose leading the faithful, freshly ejected from S. Giles, to their humble tenement in the Close. The room was given to them by an old invalid Jacobite, Thomas Kincaid, who lived in the opposite house; his only condition was that, in his bedridden

condition, he might be allowed to hear his beloved Liturgy through the open windows of the Chapel.

The fifth tableau was improvised from an entry in the old register of the church made by the celebrated Incumbent, the Rev. William Harper: "1745 Sept. 21, F. 7, circa merid. Att Linlithgow marryed Hugh Smith of Boulogne, Esqr. and Mrs. Elizabeth Seton of Touch, pr. Lit. Lady Barrowfield, Miss Paterson, Miss Erskine of Alva, Mr. Chas. Smith and Hugh Graeme wr. present. Banns published at St. Ninians.

"N.B.—Just before this office Mr. Chas. Smith brought acct. of the compleat victory obtained this morning at Gladsmuir by the Prince's army over that commanded by Genl. Cope. Δοξα τῳ θεω ἐν ὑφιστῳ."

The day following, Laurence Oliphant of Gask, one of the Carrubber's Close Congregation, crowned the victorious Prince at Holyrood with laurel leaves —"The only crown, alas! that gallant brow would ever wear"—and during his all too brief stay in the City, Prince Charlie held a reception at which many of the Congregation were present, the most celebrated, of course, being Flora Macdonald.

After the ill-fated '45, the penal laws were harshly put into operation, and we are shown four of the clergy of the Church, including the Rev. Dr Drummond of Carrubber's Close and the Rev. Robert Forbes of Leith, having been confined for five months

in Stirling Castle, roped together and marched under escort, to another five months' imprisonment in Edinburgh because of their loyalty to Church and King.

Yet another scene is drawn from the penal days when the Chapel was closed, and the Sacraments, including baptisms and weddings, were administered in secrecy. "In my closet," "In my laigh house," state the entries in the Church register, sometimes even out of doors as "in the back stairs," "The Herb Mercat," "Near the Cross." The particular scene presented was based on the following extract:

"1741. Decr. 30, F. 4, h. 5. v. In the Canongate, baptized a son of Sir Alexander Macdonald and Lady Margaret Macdonald named James. Countesses of Seaforth, Southesk and Wigton; Lady Frances Montgomerie; Mrs. Lockhart of Carnwath; Mrs. A. Lockhart; Mrs. Munro; Mrs. Kennedy; Miss Macdonald; Lords Wigton, St. Clair; Capt. Wm. Lockhart; Prof. Munro, present. S. Lit."

Sir Stuart Thriepland, secretary of the Vestry of Carrubber's Close, was also secretary to Prince Charles Edward, and a scene is introduced to show them both in hiding after Culloden. Then back to Edinburgh where a young American, Samuel Seabury, has come to study medicine at the University. Led secretly by his landlord, he joined the loyal few who still persisted in worshipping God according to their conscience. He grew so to love the persecuted

Church that when at last he was to refound the Episcopal Church in America, it was to Scotland and to our Church, free from subservience to the Hanoverian succession, that he returned, and received his episcopal orders at Aberdeen in November 1784.

The final tableau bore the heading, "They shall bring the Glory and Honour of the Nations into it," and the note on the programme goes on to tell us how "from St. Paul, through St. Columba, and through a goodly company of martyrs, our faith has come down to us. Here are representatives of the Congregation of the past, bearing names distinguished in art, literature, science, arms. Sir Robert Strange the engraver, Sir Henry Raeburn the painter, Sir Robert Sibbald the surgeon, Thomas Ruddiman the historian, William Gedd the inventor of stereotyping, Dean Ramsay, the Baroness Nairne and William Edmonstoune Ayton with their undying verses, and many, many more who, being dead, yet speak to the modern congregation, bidding them 'for the glory of God and in the service of life to go and do likewise.'"

The inheritance of a splendid and shining tradition carries a heavy responsibility. More and more Laurie entered into this heritage, determined that nothing unworthy in him should dim or tarnish it. We who come after can appreciate how much his own life and work did to enhance and perpetuate it.

II

It is notorious that sermons and addresses, profoundly moving when delivered, frequently provide the dreariest of reading. The inflexions of the voice, the varying tempos of utterance, the arresting hesitation, so typical of Laurie, for the *mot juste,* the emotional timbre, the personal magnetism of the speaker, all these are lacking on the printed page. It is true that in his private letters and in his notes for the church magazine, what Laurie wrote rang with the characteristics of his speech, but even had the most scrupulous shorthand notes of his sermons been taken, it is, we believe, unlikely that they would prove as stimulating as those, say, of John Henry Newman or Robertson of Brighton, Scott Holland, or Temple. Laurie's preaching was repetitive in the best sense of that word. Certain ideas about the Christian life were fundamental to him; his wide reading and his devout meditation enabled him to present them with an always fresh vigour; but in the long run, it was their constant reiteration, a cumulative process resulting in great spiritual simplicity, that makes one able to say, " Here, and here, are things typical of Laurie's approach to life."

Quite apart from any inadvisability of reprinting his sermons, the task is well nigh impossible, for the

sequence of ideas represented by brief notes printed in block capitals with a soft pencil on the most infinite variety of paper is known only to himself. The published account of his addresses to the Guild of Prayer* shows a firm adherence to the most orthodox Catholic teaching in ascetic theology, though marked, as one might expect, with his personal emphasis upon certain ruling ideas. Marked also, as were his sermons, by aphorisms so daring as to be disturbing, some struck out in the white heat of the intellectual moment, others hammered at till they rang like axioms—" Morality is a bye product of religion." " We are not summoned to imitate Christ, that is impossible, despite Thomas á Kempis." " The greater the sin, the greater the redemption "—exclamations so extreme that one can understand how hearers were sometimes dismayed, yet to wretched men, conscious, like S. Paul, of the undependability of their own wills, how full of the experience of forgiveness. At other times his phrases sound a less obscure, more evangelical note—" This world is a work of Redemption, immediately you think of the Cross," or again, the childlike simplicity of " Once grasp the fact that God is Love and you can go singing through the world whatever your circumstances are, spiritual or material."

However impossible it may be to give an adequate account of Laurie's teaching, allusion must be made

**The Vision of God.* Robert Grant, Edinburgh, 1939.

to his attitude to the three fundamental Christian duties of fasting, alms giving and prayer, for here his contributions, or at least his emphases, were most typical of the man.

To fasting he gave the broadest interpretation, though this did not prevent him from a literal observation when occasion so demanded. To receive or to celebrate at the Holy Eucharist, even at a late service, implied fasting preparation, and he was unwilling to institute a midnight Mass at Christmas in case it should conduce to a general breakdown of this discipline. Also, month after month in the church magazine he urged the importance of communicating early in the morning as being a spiritually profitable austerity.

Denial of the flesh had its humorous moments, as when, at the time of the 1902 Mission, Canon Antony Mitchell insisted on the simplest of evening meals being provided at Lauder House, and night after night the entire household fared on porridge before going to the service.

But it was fasting as the disciplined ordering of one's life to which Laurie attached most importance: not actual achievement, counselled S. Ignatius of Loyola, but the willingness to plan one's day so that achievement might be possible is the immediate test of sincerity.

"It demands patience, proportion, forethought, weighing responsibilities, prayer, above all, discipline

of life," Laurie had written in Iona, and to attain this he knew the importance of frequent re-dedication and the daily surrender of his will to God. His private prayer book records many such acts: "The Portiuncula, Assisi, June 1903: Jesus, in accordance with all that I see of the will and longing of Thy great servant, I set myself to gain his spirit of poverty, chastity and obedience, the utter submission of my will to His—not self-assertion, but meekness."

Or again, on yet another visit to Italy in 1922, he writes, "I can look for no completeness of self-control, no perspective of unselfish aims, unless I depend truly upon my own private devotions. To let God speak to me and not only to entreat God. Silence and detachment and earnest sincerity: I resolve to follow these with all my heart. The Church at Baveno, on the site of a Roman Temple."

In sermon after sermon he stressed the importance of this surrender of the will, and in his private dealings with souls in perplexity he was able often to bring reassurance. Thus, one young priest had approached him for advice about the saying of his daily Office. So often it was said perfunctorily and without devotion, should he omit it except at such times as he could say it with full intention and warmth of heart? Laurie replied "We worship God with our wills as well as with our heads and our hearts. We cannot always guard against

inattentiveness nor can we conjure away the coldness of our emotions as we would. But if you go on saying your Office, you are at least offering God the worship of the will. Twice a day you are giving Him twenty minutes of your time when you might be doing something else. That is at least a beginning. The other things will follow."

By such discipline he learned how to win through those periods of aridity which come to every priest. At Ephesus in 1902 he wrote, " O Lord Jesus, Thou eternal Word, who as at this place did'st teach Thy servant to know Thee through the discipline of patient waiting, grant that the bright beams of Thy Light may waken such love in me that I may be content to follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest and await in patience Thy reward." And at Strasbourg in 1908, " I am beginning to feel the real nearness of God." St. Paul, more than eighteen hundred years earlier, experienced a similar realisation—" I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

One of the heaviest of burdens which the Christian priest has to shoulder is the responsibility of finance. It is, indeed, doubly irksome, for quite apart from the intrinsic difficulty of the problem, there is always present the tension between the spiritual and the material worlds: on the one hand the priest would

willingly detach himself from the practical cares of this life, and on the other, so frequently lacking robust lay readership, again and again he finds himself concerned with providing the sinews of the spiritual war.

Laurie's compassion, further strengthened by a deep sense of obligation, made him a generous giver. Food, clothing, blankets and many other gifts were transferred from Lauder House to poorer homes on innumerable occasions. " I come across cases of such extreme poverty," he said once, " that I am ashamed even to have clean linen on my back." The giving of himself, his time, his energy, his mind, his prayers, his material possessions, was so instinctive with him as to have become not merely second, but even first, nature. And what he practised he also, with humility, preached.

But the running of a large Congregation demanded not merely generous giving by his own people in any casual way, but the preparation of schemes by which to meet increasingly heavy overhead charges, and the intermittent burdens of exceptional expenditure.

On one occasion he spent days poring over Kelly's and every other city directory he could lay hands on, writing down the addresses of everyone bearing the surname of Rose. A letter was written explaining how the Congregation had been founded by the Bishop of that name, and calling on all who might be

Rev. E. T. S. Reid
(later Bishop of St. Andrews)

Rev. W. Perry
(later Dean of Edinburgh)

Rev. Reginald Mitchell Innes.

Rev. A. E. Laurie.

even remotely connected with the family to bear their part in ensuring that the good work should be continued. Then one Sunday night, with his sister, he dragged huge hampers across to the General Post Office, and posted bundle after bundle, to the delight and amazement of the sweetheart couples who foregathered in the portico.

But such an expedient could only be tried once in a life time. Provision must be made for the regular support of the church. In answer to much prayer and prayerful thinking came The Sacrifice, one of Laurie's outstanding contributions to the life of Old S. Paul's. It was doubtless something of the appeal of apostolic poverty, the unreserved giving which looked for no return, which touched his imagination. A sale of work does indeed stimulate generous giving. The purse strings are unloosed to buy, not only things one may want, but also things which one may possibly not want. And it does much to foster the corporate life of the Congregation, even when one takes account of the petty jealousies which are so frequently occasioned.

But Laurie aimed at a method which would give one only a spiritual return for one's money and which would be so anonymous that no name could be singled out for invidious praise. Early in the year cardboard boxes were to be given out to those who desired them; money saved for God's purposes at the cost of some sacrifice was to be put into them; and

after intercessions for the success of the scheme, the boxes were to be brought to the church on Advent Sunday, slit open with a knife by the donor, and the contents poured into a common receptacle, so that the whole amount might be offered on the altar at the mid-day Eucharist.

Obviously such a scheme could have no appeal except to the purest, most disinterested, most austerely spiritual portion of one's imagination. God alone would know both the amount contributed and the devotion and generosity which lay behind. With the inauguration of the "Sacrifice," Laurie wrote in the magazine for June 1903, "We have, I think, as a Congregation, entered upon a deeper life. Like a tired swimmer, breasting a strong current to reach a place of greater security, we make a great venture. 'Too daring a venture,' some say, and shake their heads over the difficulties; 'a hopeless venture,' say others, with a kindly smile; but we say steadfastly to both, 'No, a venture of faith.'"

"Will it be justified? Just in proportion as it is earnest and real it will, undoubtedly—a venture of faith made intelligently and earnestly, is a venture of faith based upon the power and love of God—it cannot fail. I do not in any way desire to speak against the Bazaar—because you climb up a stair higher, you may not disdain the step upon which you rested in your upward progress. When I remember all the generosity displayed over the Sale

in the past, all the zeal in working, in collecting, in interesting others, I see a deep love and self-sacrifice for which I can only thank God. But I see 'a more excellent way'—a way in which love and self-sacrifice will have their fullest opportunity—and it is the method of the Sacrifice. The contrast between the two methods is just the contrast between the method of worldly wisdom, and the method of Divine Wisdom."

It is hardly necessary to add that the divine wisdom proved itself much more financially profitable than the worldly. That first year Laurie asked for £140 towards the salary of the assistant clergy: he received £140, 7s. 0d. In the year of his death, despite widespread unemployment and hardship, the scheme realised £733, 4s. 2d. That it attained this size is due largely to the unceasing way in which Laurie urged the scheme upon his people. Youthful Rectors, responsibility thrust upon them, who are afraid of hammering nails on the head time after time, should take courage in the knowledge that year after year Laurie preached the Sacrifice in season and out of season. Yet obviously it could not have succeeded as it did had it not been a real work of God; it was the religious aspect of it year by year, from the very first appeal, that Laurie stressed: "As to the method of giving the Sacrifice, I should like it to be associated with the eleven o'clock Eucharist on Advent Sunday. The Advent thought is—of

great opportunity, of the opening up of countless prospects of development, of the possession of our nature and our institutions by the spirit of the Son of God, and the Eucharist is the great link between Heaven and Earth."

In that last sentence we have the inevitable transition to the third theme of Laurie's spiritual teaching. But "transition" is hardly the word. "Fusion" would be a better one, for to Laurie all Christian activities, work and prayer and fellowship were gathered up and melted and commingled in the transcendent radiance of the Eucharist. It was the supreme, ultimately the only, act of worship: private prayer reached its most satisfying point in recalling and realising the unbearable sweetness of the Presence, a consolation in loneliness, a safeguard in temptation, an incentive to action. And public worship found its consummation in the corporate offering of that Sacrifice in which all other sacrifices took their part. In sermon after sermon, in address after address, in practical direction or in mystical exposition, his thought reverted again and again to the Blessed Sacrament, and as the years went on his penetration into the mystery went deeper and deeper, so that, when one heard him speak, one realised that he was indeed, in the beautiful Scots' phrase, "Far ben wi' God." This devotion was life long. To those of us who knew him in his rich and wise maturity it is both surprising and not surprising that

as early as 1899—the year after he became Rector, he was writing and thinking on these identical lines: ". . . . another ground for thanksgiving," he says, " is that the Celebration of Holy Communion has become the chief service of worship, both in the position of the Service and the numbers attending. I rejoice that this is so, believing most thoroughly from my heart that it is what Our Lord would have us do, and that this will ultimately become clear to all of us; and not only that it is a matter of obedience, but that this Service is so vastly richer in possibilities of worship than any other Service we possess, that it cannot fail to strengthen the link between God and our own souls."

III

" To see life steadily and see it whole." Matthew Arnold's line epitomised one of Laurie's most cherished ambitions. It was a corollary of his faith that the Christian leaven should work its miracle of sweetness in every aspect of contemporary life, and now that he had gathered about him a trained and trusted band of workers, his thought turned more and more to social work. Halfway through the nineteenth century, the novels of Reade and Dickens, the factory acts of Shaftesbury, the socialist Christianity of F. D. Maurice, had drawn, magnet-

like, the interest and sympathy of the public. The movement had now entered upon a second phase: Keir Hardie was forging the frame-work of the new Labour Party; the Church Army and the more powerful Salvation Army were pioneers in a new type of social welfare, novels of the underworld still had their vogue; W. T. Stead and Father Bernard Vaughan, sincere if somewhat sensational, captured the public ear; H. G. Wells was the rising prophet of Utopia. And in his parish in the Canongate Laurie knew the crying evils only too well—poverty, sickness, bad housing, drunkenness, prostitution. One by one he attempted to grapple with them.

Since those days, sexual delinquency has been discussed almost ad nauseam. The reticences are so few that it is not always easy to remember the degree to which conventionality had repressed the whole topic. But as Laurie's work with souls became deeper and more intimate, as he saw the battle for personal purity that penitent after penitent was fighting, saw, too, the crippling fear of abnormality with which the various bye-manifestations of sexual activity haunted the individual, he recognised that fearless teaching on the subject was essential. Such teaching always has its own dangers implicit within it—the danger of putting ideas into people's heads, the danger of allowing the intimacy of such talks to be itself a sublimation of rather dubious value, a

focussing of the attention on the difficulty rather than a rising above it.

Laurie was willing to run the risk, and though he came in for his share of criticism, there is also no doubt that he was a great source of help to many. We all have our phases when certain ideas are dominant in our mental outlook and when it is not always easy to preserve a sense of proportion. If Laurie at moments lost this proportion, at least he never failed those who turned to him for advice and comfort, and what more can be said of any parish priest?

But teaching is barely half the battle, and furthermore, scope must be given for the taught in which to make their adventurous experiments. Consequently in December 1902, Laurie acquired a three year lease of a disused type factory, situated in the grounds of Whitefoord House in the Canongate, which was to accommodate club rooms for men and boys, a large gymnasium, and a Dispensary. " My aim in acquiring the premises," said Laurie, " is to provide a kind of modified ' People's Palace ' for the district, which would, perhaps, partially counteract the attractions of our public houses, of which there are so many in our neighbourhood . . . . There are several such schemes already functioning in the city, but no systematic attempt has yet been made, so far as I am aware, to carry the war into the enemy's camp in our own district. One does not dream of

separating this social work from our religious work. One of the chief lessons we have all to learn nowadays is the error of attempting to draw lines between the social and the religious, the sacred and the secular."

The fortunes of this venture were varied, and the People's Palace project had to be abandoned. But two aspects of the work require particular mention—the Dispensary, which ran most successfully until Laurie decided to close it in 1917 for reasons which are not fully known. It is believed he thought its work redundant, though this was not entirely the case. And, secondly, the S. Saviour's Child Garden, an offshoot of the movement, which is to-day the loveliest school in the city.

The Dispensary idea evolved out of Laurie's personal interest in medicine. On his visits he would often with his own hands change dressings and apply poultices, and do other little bits of sick-nursing. More regular work began in a small way in a room off Galloway's Entry, and when the premises at Whitefoord House were acquired, they were able to invite Dr Isabel Venters and, later, Dr Marshall, to take charge, with a number of medical students as helpers. Others came and went as their work permitted them, including Mr John Fraser during his days as a Resident at the Infirmary, all of them giving their time and skill entirely free. Whether or not it was due to an early prejudice against women

doctors is uncertain, but the clientèle was mainly women and children. Miss Thistle, who sacrificed an important appointment in 1907, in order to become the sister-in-charge, paints a vivid picture of a typical evening's work. The doors would be opened at half past seven, sometimes even earlier, and from then until well past midnight the patients would throng the building, passing from the crowded gas-lit waiting room to examination by the doctor, and then to the dispensary to get their medicine—twopence for the prescription and a penny for the bottle. Wounds would be dressed, skin diseases anointed, sore eyes bathed; the more serious stomach troubles obviously had to be passed on to the hospitals; a gynaecological clinic was held on certain afternoons. After the dispensary was closed, some of the cases were followed up in the tall tenements. Occasionally diphtheria would be diagnosed and removal to fever wards would be carried out in the small hours. Frequently it would be two in the morning before the work was over, and Mrs Allen, the admirable caretaker, would turn out the gas, the doctors would trudge up the Canongate towards their distant beds, and Miss Thistle make her way to the Hostel where she lived with other helpers—medical students and nurses.

Laurie came only occasionally to the dispensary—he would look in sometimes at the "tea-fights" given for the mothers—but he went frequently to

the Hostel, and in its little chapel would guide with great care the spiritual policy of the work. He could have complete confidence in the capability of the workers—"Go where you like," said all the doctors in the district, and co-operation with them and with the district nurses was most cordial—but it was for Laurie to watch the religious orientation of the work, and also, of course, to find the money which would enable it to struggle on.

IV

None of the ventures of this period brought more delight to Laurie's heart than the founding of S. Saviour's Child Garden. From a superficial point of view it might never have happened; from a believer's point of view, each step, haphazard though it might seem at the moment, must have been planned in God's providence.

The Child Garden came into being because Laurie wanted a school for young children in which definite church teaching could be given, and because, at the same time, a young Englishwoman wanted to be put in touch with a few boys and girls with whom she might start a Kindergarten.

One day Miss Hardy (for that was the Englishwoman's name) went to Old S. Paul's, as she puts it, "out of curiosity." She liked the service, gave her

name as one who wished to become a member of the Congregation, and several months later some one called to collect for the Clergy Sustentation Fund. For over a year, that was all that happened. Miss Hardy went on at her private teaching and started to save money with which to open her experimental work in the poorer part of the town. Some one suggested she should tell Laurie of her idea, but she suspected him of being unbusinesslike, and was hard to persuade. At last Miss Balfour brought about an introduction: it was not entirely happy. Laurie had in mind a definite school, not a glorified play centre, and he wanted to start with slightly older children than those of kindergarten age. He seemed distrustful of Miss Hardy, not knowing she was a fully qualified teacher. "He thought me a little uneducated governess," she said afterwards. But on her side, Miss Hardy was at once drawn by the manner in which Laurie's thought penetrated secular teaching with spirituality and though she frankly confesses that she felt "squashed and discouraged" by her interview, she decided to see Laurie again.

For several months the feeling that he was suspicious of her lingered, only to merge into realisation that he was preparing her for her work in the most wonderful way. It was almost like serving a novitiate. Many talks followed; he gave her a refresher course in Confirmation teaching, so that she should understand thoroughly the religious

principles under which they were to work together; they prayed and meditated and planned, slowly and carefully. More and more she, on her side, recognised what a help the support of a church like Old S. Paul's would be, and more and more Laurie was won to an appreciation of her knowledge of children.

Illness intervened, and on the doctor's orders Miss Hardy went to a convent in Bayeux, from which she returned in October 1906 filled with inspiration, and with a clear vision of what she was to do. Laurie suggested that she should begin work in the Choir vestry. The idea was beautiful enough—children going to school in a church—but Miss Hardy, with the commonsense of a St. Theresa, saw that the stairs were steep, that there would be far too many visitors, that no ground was available for digging into a garden, and, most important of all, that there was no W.C. handy. That project was abandoned.

After vain searching, it was decided to begin in Brown's Close, where a waste space at the side might one day be coaxed into growing flowers, and where there was a proper lavatory. Sanctified commonsense won the day—it was an All Saints' Day too, and after the early Eucharist in Old S. Paul's, Laurie gave her and a nurse, who was just starting work, a little service of blessing and self-dedication. That Thursday morning the Child Garden opened—with three children!

The following Tuesday Laurie came to hold the

first of their services. Although already gifted in work with older children he did not know very much about younger ones, and was awkward and shy with them. He expected a solemn religious silence before he began to pray, and on that morning one of the children howled the whole time he was there, and Mis Hardy was trying hard to stave off " the weeps " in the other two. Altogether it was very strained and unreal.

The fundamental difficulty was that Laurie did not really know the children, and Miss Hardy suggested that he should stay after the service and play with them for a while. This was immediately successful and Laurie quickly perfected that natural approach to children and that ability to enter into their minds which made him the envy of other clergy. Ministers and students of different denominations used to come to his catechising in the Church on Sunday afternoons which was so happy, so informal, and so thorough in an unobtrusive way. He knew that laughter was one of God's most precious gifts. The Rev. G. T. S. Presslie writes, describing a journey on horseback one beautiful moonlit night in December 1905, from Tembuland to a Presbyterian mission station near Umtata, in Kaffraria. His companion was a New College graduate, and the talk turned somehow to Old S. Paul's. " When I was in residence in the Settlement in the Pleasance," said the Presbyterian, " I never lost a chance of going down to Old S. Paul's

to listen to Laurie taking the Children's Service. I can't feel too grateful for those Sunday afternoons—they were a tremendously important part in my training for the ministry."

The secret, of course, was that Laurie loved the children, loved their way of thinking, loved their expressive idioms which he came to use himself in talking to them—the quaintness and the tenderness of Lowland Scots. He would never say "Do you not know?" but always, "D'ye no' ken'?" "Stop crying, dear" is cold comforting compared to "Dinna greet, ma wee hen." Certain stories were frequently used as illustrations in sermons—the child who said that the flowers were God's love letters; the small brother, rebuked by his smaller sister for eating sweets, thus breaking his Lenten rule: "I'll tell the Lord Jesus on ye," she said. "He'll no hear ye, then," replied the boy, smiling securely with inside information. "Whit wey?" "He's no' here." "Where's He gane?" Oot by, in the desert, bein' tempit." Or that other episode of the child who had so cut his finger in the street gutter that blood poisoning had necessitated amputation. When he came back to school he asked his teacher in an awed voice: "D'ye ken where ma wee pinkie (finger) is?" "May be it's in the Hospital?" "Well, it's no." "May be it's down the drain?" "Well, it's no." "May be you've got it in a hanky to show me?" Again he shook his head. "Well,

where is it, then?" Awe not unadultered with pride, rang in his voice as he replied, pointing heavenwards, "Up there, wi' the Lord Jesus."

And yet the early days were difficult enough. "To visit the Kindergarten," writes Miss Hardy in her most entrancing *Diary of a Free Kindergarten,* "You enter by a narrow little door under a stair, which looks as if it led into a cellar; but inside, when the children are there, it looks quite nice . . . . The windows are high, unfortunately, and rather small . . . . I have a daily inspection of hands and faces, and if they don't come up to a certain standard they have to be washed. The standard is distinctly rising, and those who have been longest with me are the cleanest."

Less than two years after the foundation however, a great chance occurred. An old house, No. 8 Chessel's Court, came into the market. "The house is really a beautiful one," writes Miss Hardy, "good proportions, panelled walls, lovely cornices, coats of arms and oil paintings over the fireplaces, *and*—most dear to a Kindergartner's heart—abundance of cupboard room. The garden is on the south side, sheltered, and, for the district, marvellously secluded. In front of us there is nothing but breweries on a much lower level, so that it is practically open, and we have a fine view of Salisbury Crags. One small piece of ground has been under cultivation, and boasts an ivied wall, and a real pear-*tree.*" . . . .

It had once been owned by the notorious Deacon Brodie, who was, some say, the original of Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.* Latterly the brewer of one of the big businesses in the Canongate had lived in it, and now he was removing. After months of anxious negotiation the premises were acquired and the "flitting" from Brown's Close began on October 1st, 1908. The move cost the vast sum of sixpence. By All Saints' Day, the children were in their new Garden.

Its subsequent history is both too long and too well known to require description. Country holidays, gardening, play acting, garden parties, paddling pools, all that loving thought could conceive, was accomplished. Laurie, always a magician in raising funds, compelled the interest of people all over the country, stoutly aided by Dr Blaikie of Constable's Publishing Firm, whose daughter was helping with the work.

Right to the very end of his life Laurie was plotting and planning, and after his death yet another of his schemes was completed—the transformation of a lower level of garden, sunless and sour soiled, into an extra playground for his children. Miss Hardy had to resign owing to ill health, in 1931, and Miss Herdman took her place and developed the work still further, adding a nursery school department so that they could receive children from the age of two. At the moment of writing, a

country house near Galashiels is their home, and war time evacuation is at least providing an interesting experiment in boarding school life for children of that age.

Over all remains the happy wisdom of Laurie, as of some benign presence. He was always at his gayest with the children, and they loved him dearly in return. Neighbours must cherish memories of those Wednesday mornings when he went to take the children's service, for the little altar was the all important and wholly natural focus of their day. Indeed, after his death, when his photograph was put on a ledge, facing this altar from the other side of the room, one child was observed nudging and pushing another during the prayers. The overheard remark stayed the teacher's interference: "Move along," whispered the child, "He canna' see."

On these mornings a picked bodyguard would be sent to escort him from the church. They clung to his arms and thrust their hands deep into the pockets of his familiar black overcoat, where, most mysteriously, a strange rabbit would nibble their fingers.

V

Space forbids more than the mere mention of the multifarious activities of Laurie during this period, even although many of them are most characteristic.

He was in constant demand for taking Retreats, where the impressive gravity of his speech and his spiritual inerrancy with individual souls made him always a helpful Conductor, even though he himself might be left exhausted and even depressed. "I'm glad the retreat is over," he wrote after one of them, "I am profoundly dissatisfied with my share in it—but I always am. I wish I could learn to be simple and plain, instead of wrapping up what I have to say in such suffocating layers of other thoughts."

Yet the stimulus of ideas meant everything to him and round about 1909-1910 an impromptu debating society sprang up, known as The Philosophers. They used to meet in Lauder House at ten o'clock at night for a simple supper and then they talked and talked, a group of men discussing the ideas and topics of the day, until well into the small hours. Many a time the sun rose upon their deliberations and they would watch the gathering daylight from the drawing-room windows.

On one occasion Laurie was drawn into more public disputation. He had, apparently, been describing the proceedings of the Council of Nicaea to his men's Bible Class, and had commented on the facts that Pope Sylvester was not himself present, but was represented by two priests as legates, and also that the Canons enacted revealed no evidence of Rome's supreme claims in appellate jurisdiction, but rather the contrary, that other provinces had wide

liberty in such matters. His remarks were repeated to Father Power, that energetic giant who made such a mark on the Jesuit congregation in Edinburgh, and Laurie was subsequently taken to task with a sententiousness that warmed him to a series of spirited replies. Father Power confronted Laurie with many erudite references, and Laurie, who had, as it happened, made a close study of the period, gave as good as he got, capping quotation with quotation.

Written history inevitably implies a definite point of view, for history must consist not only of so-called facts, but also of the interpreted significance of those facts for the writer. From the standpoint of Anglican theology it would seem that Laurie was right in his interpretation; from the personal standpoint one can see, tracing the vestigial remains of the correspondence, how Laurie was piqued by the unctuous superiority and sweeping generalisations of the Jesuit.

The extent of Laurie's reading was not generally recognised by those fellow clergy who did not know him intimately, but to write a book on the early church was one of his life-long ambitions—unfulfilled because he knew it would require hours of exact scholarship which he could ill spare from his pastoral work. And indeed, widely read though he was, the appeal of religion came to him much more through the heart than through the head—as, of course, it should. He was immensely sensitive to

"atmosphere," to anything which could charge a crowd with electric emotion, just as he might have charged a condenser from his Wimshurst machine. Each Christmas with lovable regularity he recommended his flock to re-read Dicken's Christmas Carol. That its goodness was effective because of the sentimentality of the writing did not worry him, and his attitude was the same with regard to church music. Many members of his congregation regretted that Old S. Paul's did not aim at the standard set by such London churches as All Saints', Margaret Street, or St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, or St. John's, Red Lion Square—standards not entirely impossible to the large and highly trained choir. But the musical ordering of the services was not with Laurie a major issue, and the opinion of Mr Potter, appointed organist in 1901, is interesting on this point. "The Rector as a musician," he writes, "is a little hard to place. He was really musical in the sense that he understood what he liked and what he did not like. He was very fond of melody and could be thrilled at times by big choruses like the Hallelujah, but his taste was not what we might call highbrow. He liked singing hymn tunes and anything that got at one's emotions. He once said that 'religion could not be reached through the head as well as through the heart.' So musically, he did not care so much what we sang, so long as it served a definite purpose."

VI

Every August a well earned holiday broke the routine of Laurie's year. He was avid for every kind of experience and would go now to the Highlands of Scotland, now to the West of Ireland, but most frequently of all to the Continent. Travelling usually with a few friends, he found happiness and interest wherever he went, but if the truth must be told, he preferred cities to landscapes, people to places, and the monuments of men to the grandeur of nature. With him, as with many another, the object of all travel was to visit the shores of the Mediterranean and much as he loved his own country, he would turn with relief from the wet mists of the Scottish glens, southwards, to the sun and the ancient centres of civilisation.

The most treasured of those holidays was a brief visit to the Holy Land in the Spring of 1902. Sailing Messageries Maritimes from Marseilles, one of a party of fifty or sixty, which included a smaller group of his own personal friends, they called at the Piræus on the journey eastwards. Doubtless he had an eye for the glory that was Greece, but during those few hours ashore it was of his Congregation's patron saint that he chiefly thought and we are told that he repeated the whole of Paul's address to the Athenians as he stood on Mars Hill. Then on to

Ephesus to see the tremendous remains of the Temple of Diana, and then to Samos, where they landed one Sunday morning for a climb among the olive groves and the sun bleached hills.

But it was at Haifa that the real thrill began. And surely there can be few more romantic landfalls?—The blue Mediterranean breaking in bright surf along those yellow sands of the world's oldest thoroughfare—the ancient Way of the Sea; the sudden bluff of Carmel, crowned with pine trees, on its seaward face the white washed monastery, a spiritual coastguard station to the Holy Land; inland the broad and gentle valley of Esdrælon, now as always the richest tillage in Palestine. At the further end of the crescent bay lay the dishevelled ruins of the once proud Acre, and at the nearer, under the heights of Carmel, "that ancient river, the River Kishon," brimmed out to sea beside the busy port of Haifa.

Laurie and his friends drove in open carriages along the road towards where Nazareth perched on the fence-like ring of hills—a fence whose gap was Jezreel and whose gigantic gate post was Mount Tabor. Beyond the town, among the orange groves and the purple and viridian fields, Laurie stopped his carriage and got out. Then he knelt down and touched the ground reverently—"Dear Earth, I do salute thee with this hand."

Records are scanty and it is impossible to do much

more than supply an itinerary—Nazareth with the cool rock-hewn gloom of the Sacred Home, the Virgin's Well, the Synagogue, the steep, channelled streets with craftsmen hard at work with fingers and toes, just as they must have been two thousand years ago. The first bowl of leben at their hotel, and the walk in the moonlight on the hills above the town when Laurie and the Provost of Perth Cathedral led the pilgrims in prayer.

Then on to Tiberias. Tradition has it that the King of the Fleas still lives there and it is certainly a dirty and smelly village. Indifferent sanitation and contaminated food and the general sultriness—(the Lake of Galilee is below sea level and malarial mosquitos are not unknown)—something at Tiberias upset Laurie, but he was not too ill to miss a sail on the Lake, including a sudden storm, nor, when their carriages carried them back again towards Haifa, to dismount at the Horns of Hattin, and looking down upon that tranquil landscape, to photograph vividly upon the sensitive plates of his memory, the traditional setting of the Sermon on the Mount.

Going by steamer from Haifa, they shot the reefs at Jaffa in open boats, a heavy swell running, and took train to Jerusalem where they stayed at an hotel outside the Jaffa Gate. It was the Russian Easter and Laurie loved every moment of it. He haunted the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and made long

meditations at the Holy Places there. He was particularly fascinated by the Stone of Anointing, and one of his happiest memories was that he had celebrated the Holy Communion in Abraham's Chapel, the little room in the Orthodox Monastery which is immediately above the Rock of Calvary.

The night before the Russian Easter he spent alone in prayer in a garden on the Mount of Olives. Again and again in after life he drew inspiration from the memory: the almost oppressive brilliance of the moonlight that threw into high relief the white bastions of the city wall on the other side of the valley above him, that burnished the domes and cupolas of Mosque or Church, that coined to brittle silver every olive leaf, every pebble, in the Garden where he knelt. All round him were the noises of people—a man singing in the city over against him, a dog at a nearby farm baying the moon, a donkey trotting homewards down the Jericho road, a party of fellahin quarrelling as they stumbled up the steep tracks to Bethany. As he strove to contemplate Our Lord in the agony of Gethsemane, Laurie cannot have failed to recall how that hillside would be thronged with the tents of Passover Pilgrims, nor to realise how there can be such devastating solitude even among a multitude. He brought home with him from Palestine a crown of thorns which he himself plaited. Was it on this night, one wonders, that he broke the stems of stubborn camel thorn

from the arid hillside and, with fingers scratched and bleeding, wove them into a crown?

He loved the excitement of Easter Day, the crowds, the candles, the processions, the pilgrims shouting excitedly " Christ is risen! Christ is risen! " He loved, too, the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, and Bethany, just out of sight of Jerusalem, brooding over the miraculously changing blues of the Mountains of Moab; but he did not wish to go far afield from the city. He would linger on the Lithostratos (" The Pavement "); he would jostle the picturesque crowds in David Street; he would gaze with fascination on the weepers at the Wall of Wailing—once he nearly assaulted an American tripper who lifted the veil of a woman worshipper to see if her tears were genuine. To stand and gaze at the Ecce Homo Arch moved him intensely. On their last morning they rose at four when the air blows sweet and cool from the Lebanon —" like as the dew of Hermon which fell upon the hill of Sion "—and made the Stations of the Cross on the Via Dolorosa.

And so, with minds crowded with memories, to Jaffa again and to the different yet somehow lesser wonders of Cairo, and finally to a cold and rough journey homewards, the Gulf of Lyons behaving in its traditional manner.

Again and again he turned to the Continent. " We want to experience more than can ever be crowded

into seventy or eighty years," says Henry Field in *All this and Heaven too,* " I am too greedy, perhaps, but I want to catch at the meaning of different lives in different places. I want to find out what goes on under the thatched roofs of cottages and behind the walls of palaces and hotels. I want to walk in old ruins and new cities. I want to watch people everywhere, whether I can understand the words they are saying or not. It is too much to ask, perhaps, but I want to get behind the faces of men and women and feel what they are feeling." Laurie would probably have expressed his own ideals in identical words. He was passionately desirous of understanding life in every phase, of making his own nature richer and more sympathetic.

There would be little point in tracing his travels from year to year, even if material were forthcoming, but there emerge such definite characteristics, both of the man and of the priest, in his letters that it seems fitting to give some extracts from them. They reveal the cultured traveller, the priest who, even on holiday, still bore the cares of pastoral work in his heart, the artist and the mystic, to whom beautiful buildings and beautiful rites made their especial appeal. The quotations are drawn from a handful of letters—so few in number that it would be pedantic to attempt to edit them into any unified sequence.

Lucerne, August, 1924.

"I'm writing on a terrace in front of the house, overlooking the lake with Pilatus in the background, Mt. Rigi to the right, and snow-covered Titlis in the far distance. The blue of the sky and of the lake match the blue of the mountains, and the fleecy clouds make a cap for Pilatus which in local tradition means good weather. It is hot and sunny and beyond description beautiful. I go out each morning to the Hof Kirche, where at 8 daily there's a Missa Cantata, a magnificent organ kept well in hand and about a dozen boys' voices exquisitely modulated. The service is simplicity itself, and *so* devout. I have often been in Switzerland before but never for any length of time in Lucerne, and it is more devout I really think than any other Roman community I've ever come across. There is such an absence of the customary fuss and tawdriness, and such an obvious reverence and devotion.

The Low Mass on Sunday is almost incredible. I've often been at "people's Masses" in France, Germany, and Italy, where always there has been music and singing, but here—the huge Church, a great Cathedral packed, even all the standing room is packed with a devout silent multitude, and never a sound, save the murmuring away far up at the Altar, and the occasional sweetness of the silver bells. I've never struck anything like it before. This

immense congregation absorbed in devotion, in absolute silence from beginning to end with the one purpose of worshipping Our Lord Present in the Holy Eucharist."

Hotel Grand Monarque, Chartres. August 28th, 1928.

"I am turning my face homewards and hope to see you within another fortnight. I have thought of you daily—and remembered you, where you would wish to be remembered, many times every day—for there has seldom been a day in which we have not paid visits to several Churches, and always my mind goes back to Old S. Paul's and all the Flock—sick and well. We have had a long tour—as far south as Monte Carlo, spending a week at St. Raphael where we got constant bathing. A glorious sun always—indeed I think that we have had only two showers since we left Edinburgh. . . . .

I wish I could transport you to this place. It is very wonderful, and though it is now very familiar to me it always strikes one afresh as one of the most wonderful human manifestations of the beauty of God. There are few artificial things that are entirely beautiful, they are all more or less sullied by imperfection, but really this place almost seems to be perfect, and gives one the impression of almost being alive. It is the Cathedral of course I am

speaking of—the marvellous glass of Chartres you will have heard of no doubt, it is the most wonderful in the world in its way, very delicate, like jewels; the impression given, as one is inevitably drawn up by the lines of the great Gothic building and at last reaches the Clerestory, is like a burst of beautiful music, and makes me think of a Psalm very familiar no doubt to you, the 19th, is it? "The Heavens declare the Glory of God," etc.—and you remember the verse—"There is neither speech nor language but their voices are heard" and it's like that to me, as if the whole beauty of the place broken into a soundless chorus of praise—so extraordinarily beautiful that not even earthly sounds could express it. This seems very involved but what it came to was this, that I thanked God for this beauty and for all the earthly beauty which manifested in some measure what He is. I remembered you also, for you have been the instrument in His Hand for the expression of the beauty of worship. I daresay as you think of it all, you may think some of your work has been lost, but it is not so—just as the wireless waves go on apparently for ever—so any of the beauty which by God's grace we have been able to express in His service, will go on and on somehow in the infinity of God." . . . .

Assisi. July 1929.

"We were at the Subasio which is, as you know, next door to S. Francis—so were in and out all the time—and indeed the larger part of the time I spent at Assisi I think I spent in the Church in one way or another. The spirit of Francis lives in it still and the whole atmosphere is so unusually devout. So often in these famous shrines the atmosphere has become over-emphasised, over-elaborated and formal, but I was delighted to note the sincerity and simplicity of the services and all the ecclesiastical community.

But wonderful as it is, you know, the twentieth century is not the thirteenth, and though the spirit of Francis is timeless and eternal because it's the Spirit of his Master, yet the *method* of expression has altered. That is just our difficulty to-day, and it is that which occupies my mind more than anything else. How to find the expression of that Spirit in the terms of our time. I'm satisfied that it cannot be the same for all—that up to a point each individual is bound to interpret the spirit for himself, and to do so just as far as he has apprehended it not from without, but spontaneously from within. Yet even so there are certain common lines of connection of body—soul—and spirit which must be expressed by all. How to make them articulate and accessible is the problem."

Hotel Julia, Port Manech, Brittany. August 1927.

. . . ." I am sitting at an open double door which is also the only window of my room facing what I should think is the coast of Spain . . . . There is a sound of wind in the trees and the low moaning of the surf on the rocks which is the undertone of everything here . . . .It is a wonderful place and this hotel is built on a little spur of rock which runs out into the sea, part of the Bay of Biscay. It is marvellous in all moods, sunshine or storm, not that we have had much of the latter, but a walk along the cliffs this morning in the mist and slight drizzle, with the tang of the surf in the air making the lips salt, and a good strong wind dashing the seas about, almost approached the stormy. . . . . The country abounds with 12th and 13th century churches, so many indeed that some are left derelict and some are used for secular purposes. Our route here was as interesting ecclesiastically as it could well be, starting from Calais nearly a fortnight ago, a night each at St Omer, Amiens, Versailles, Chartres, Tours, Nantes, with intermediate calls at Blois, Angers, Beauvais, etc., too many to recount. But none of course like Chartres which is more wonderful than ever. In the early morning the place just seems to be alive, as if it were not merely an epitome of God in material form, but as if somehow it really was "God!" It sounds absurd but there is a lot in it.

The very building, from the dim splendour of the architecture to the glory of jewelled glass in the Lady Chapel especially, where Mass was being said, was the living, throbbing manifestation of the Eternal Spirit. The Holy Sacrament of which it was the Shrine, and which brought together the various little groups of townspeople and Sisters, Nuns, tourists, everyone—was the living witness to the love of the Eternal Son in His Incarnate and Eucharistic Life, while the sense of purpose, of meaning, of object, of a destiny so great as to calm all superficial restlessness, was the very presence of the Eternal Father's Will. So that really it almost seemed as if the whole thing lived, and the Brooding Presence of the Life lifted one up in adoration. . . . . It was a very blessed time, but not there only, and not least even in this peasant part. Monday, for instance, was the Feast of the Assumption and from five o'clock onwards there were Masses going at Pont Aven where we were. I was at one or two and thought of Old S. Paul's amidst all the country people. There were two sermons, one at eight and one at ten, in honour of the Virgin, and a simple and rather pathetic procession in the afternoon—pathetic in its very simplicity, but very earnest and impressive.

And not alone in Church, but as I was singing aloud along the cliffs in the wind and spray, or lying in the sun on the sand of the little beach, or

gathering blackberries (such quantities) in the little lanes adjoining, or in the little churches that we stopped at on our motor runs, I think of the many, many ways in which God has been so good to me in spite of my constant failure. I can do nothing but bow down inwardly at their number.

Sternan-Wirthaus, Sæsbachwalden, Schwarzwald, August 18th 1931.

"I am here sitting in a hotel bedroom looking out on to wooded hills *dripping* with the familiar Scotch mist, with a black sky overhead and a miniature river running down the village street. . . . . Paris was kind—hardly any bad weather save occasional showers. We met one of O.S.P.'s people in the hotel and were a merry party of five—painting the gay city a gayer red—with every contrast—the Madeleine in the early morning, Montmartre late at night, but a very jolly time without a single untoward moment. The journey here was not unexciting, my German being (if possible) even worse than my French, and with frontiers to cross, tickets to purchase (for even Cook couldn't book us to this outlandish place!) officials to placate, vehicles to procure—there were moments of interrogation. However, all's well that ends well and we arrived here (after three changes) in glorious sunshine to find a big semi-Swiss chalet in the bottom of a basin

of wooded hills, a church ten yards distant with a bell that rings incessantly, a group of similar chalets which includes a Post Office, a boot shop and a Bierhalle and that's about all. Picturesque peasants, oxen drawing the carts, delightful children, an occasional motor bus with the funniest of bugle horn hooters and—the rain! Yes, indeed—the rain! When you get up, when you go to bed, when you *think* it's going to be fine and when you *know* it isn't. . . . . However, it doesn't daunt us—we go out and go on excursions.* We've been to Freudenstadt where we saw the oddest church I have ever seen in my life, shaped like a right angle with the pulpit in the angle, built in the early days of the Reformation, at the height of the Protestant wave, and so arranged that the men sat in one aisle, the women in the other, and neither could see the other! You see these wise people knew how the charms of a gentler sex inevitably came between the devotion ot the poor innocent striving males and its true direction. And how much have women to answer for distracting the sternly set endeavours of poor toiling men with the wiles of their beauty, the

*"We spent most of the time in water in one way or another," he wrote once from Christianssand, "either on the lake or in torrents of rain. Imagine to what depths I must have come, when I could rejoice, as I did one day, to drink weak tea and eat partially boiled eggs out in a torrent of rain on a shelterless shore at a smoky fire which I had to kindle out of soaking twigs: 'This,' as the Scotsman grimly said, up to the waist in a peat bog, when stalking in a highland mist, 'this is pleasure.'"

Cupid shafts of their glances! Freudenstadt elders knew all about it and built their church accordingly .... We are quite a party here, ten of us in all .... at night uproarious card games—poor "Hearts out" has been superseded by "Rummy"—"Beggar my Neighbour" and the immortal "Slippery."

That's one side, and there's the other, the wonderful beauty of the hills—the constantly changing view—flowers, flowers everywhere, of every colour. Wonderful quiet and peace. And the church. The church is most attractive—always open night and day. The most living stillness and peace. Most attractive in its services, for the people are very simple and devout; they come from the surrounding villages and fill the great church, singing those stately solemn chorales most inspiringly. But even more attractive in its emptiness. I go in the early morning and the peace of it is wonderful, and then again in the evening, or perhaps for an hour in the afternoon. The place breathes religion of the simplest kind, very near to reality. I have a favourite place near a great Crucifix, where I kneel and think of Scotland and Old S. Paul's and its clergy and people, sick and well .... so you see, both in the tangible and intangible worlds I am full of happiness, humble thankfulness and peace—marred by just one awful haunting fear—that this lazy, restful, peaceful, overfed life will end in making me FAT!"

Hotel Bedford, 17 due de l'Arcade, Madeleine, Paris.
27th August, 1934.

"The beauty of the journey across was quite inexpressible. There was not the slightest untoward moment from beginning to end—a slight (very slight) bumping when we taxied along the ground at Le Bourget, but nothing in the least upsetting. It was a gorgeous day and the colours, as we passed over the coast line at Dover, and again when we touched the coast line of France, were just incredibly beautiful—the turquoise blue and emerald green of the sea and the gold of the sands, and the grass and dotted houses—all made up a feast of colour that just made one hold one's breath and murmur "How beautiful" . . . . I don't know what our rate of flying was, but we left Croydon about 1 o'clock and I was sitting in this hotel soon after 3.30. I had lunch on board—the first time in my life that I have eaten a three course lunch crossing the Channel. It really was almost incredible to stop in the middle of commonplace eating and drinking and to think that we were 2,000 feet up in the air and flying like a bird. . . . . If it were for nothing else but the journey here my coming has been worth while, but Paris has been kind—real August weather—very hot. I am sitting without coat or vest or boots in my bedroom writing this: I hope it will grow cooler. I thought of you when sitting at a table on the

pavement outside the Café de l'Univers drinking Italian vermouth and Eau-de-Selz, with the little pieces of ice tinkling against the tumbler! Very cooling and comforting that. But that is by no means all the story—I had been walking in the Luxembourg Gardens where the flowers are just wonderful and the fragrance almost overpowering. Then I walked down the Boul' Miche' to Notre Dame and set up a candle near the statue of Joan of Arc. It was her sense of beauty in the woods and fields that opened up her nature to the "voices" of St. Catherine and St. Michael. That picture of Puvis de Chavanne's in the Pantheon tells the story—the beauty of the wood, the simplicity of the land and the mystical figure blending with and growing from the trees. . . . . I set up another candle at St. Geneviève's tomb in St. Etienne du Mont—do you remember the picture of Geneviève looking over the beauty of the sleeping Paris? . . ."

Hotel des Etrangers, Syracuse, Sicily. 22nd February, 1935.

. . . ." I wish you were here. If we could sit together on the top gallery of the Greek amphitheatre—where Plato sat and Archimedes planned—looking out to the blue Mediterranean, the blazing sun drawing out the little lizards to bask, and the breath of fragrant orange and lemon groves behind,

the grass beside us covered with asphodel, the woods to the right—palm and cypress and pine. So it was y'day as I sat and dreamed about the 'sundry times and divers manners' in which God had spoken to the children of men. . . . . You get such a fine perspective—everything unrolls itself—and the major happenings become minor, and the minor ones seem to have been really major. And over all is the conviction that 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends.' I remembered you—in the Temple of Minerva of all places—but it's no longer pagan. It was converted into a Christian church in the sixth century and has been continuously used for the seeking and worshipping of God for over 1,500 years —that's striking, isn't it? Well, I go there daily for Matins, sometimes I'm there for late Mass—I kneel at the bottom of the church near the Baptistery—the Font being an old pre-Christian vessel—and I look up the long vista of fluted columns, that have heard those varied echoes of human need for so long, and in such variousness, and I mingle with those cries an appeal to God for the 'little flock' of Old S. Paul's—in this place which was the scene of their patron's visit on his way to martyrdom.". . . .

Rome. March, 1935.

. . . . "We were over the Vatican again yesterday—very full of treasures, of course, but a museum rather than anything else. We began by endeavouring to

penetrate into the Pope's private apartments, having mistaken our way, and caused no little excitement among the picturesque Papal Guards who looked exactly as if they had stepped out of a costume play. S. Peter's had much the same effect on me as it had the last time I was here, before the war: stupendous, majestic, overwhelming, breath-taking, and *inhuman.* One of the wonders of the world, rather than a place to worship in or find God in. The details are always interesting—the famous Pietà, the Confession (which impressed me most), the monument to the Old Chevalier and to Charles Edward—all intensely interesting, but not to be compared for inspiration to the Syracusan Temple-Church.

To-day we are going out to the Tre Fontane and to S. Paul's beyond the walls. . . . . I'll remember you all at the Sacred Places, and especially at the Quo Vadis. Life is such a difficult and incalculable thing that one never knows when we have to face Him going to martyrdom for our failures. We need the vision, bitter as it is, to save us from at least conscious and wilful failures. . . . ."

Italy and France were his oldest loves, but Laurie travelled also to Germany, to Austria and Hungary, to Scandinavia, and always with an eager interest in what he saw, in the historical associations, in the people he met, in the churches where every day he went to pray.

Always sensitive to the political atmosphere, he must have been aware how electrically the clouds were charged one summer before he left Edinburgh for the South: Ireland on the verge of civil war, France agitated over the trial of Madame Caillaux as it had not been agitated since the affaire Dreyfus, the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo, the ominous rumble of general mobilisation, and then the howitzer barrage breaking over the forts at Liège. August 1914 found Laurie on the eve of going on holiday: shortly after war was declared he set off for London.

I

The alacrity with which Laurie found his way into the firing line is well-known. The deep-seated causes which led to this impetuosity may perhaps reveal themselves in his letters from the Front, but for the moment we must simply be content to record the fact. Perhaps something of Rupert Brooke's cry—"Now God be thank'd who has matched us with His hour"—echoed in his ears, and the gesture to which he was impelled, when viewed in retrospect, was certainly magnificently Quixotic and magnificently insubordinate—the appointment of himself as a Chaplain to the regular British Army already in the field.

In London he tried to pull every available string in order to obtain a short service commission, but Kitchener, convinced in his own mind of the magnitude of the struggle, refused to appoint padres for less than a year. Undaunted, Laurie went on his own sweet way: the Vestry granted him three months' leave of absence; the French Embassy found

itself unable to refuse him a special visa; and his sister and friends supplied him to the best of their ability with a first aid outfit, boot-cleaning materials, a "hussif" and a methylated spirit stove.

Picture him then, clad in his sober clerical garb, a motley of impedimenta slung on his back, his cumbersome box of Communion Vessels in one hand, a travelling rug in the other, an earnest, but, one feels also, a hopelessly incongruous figure among the army stores and khaki-clad figures on the quay at Folkestone.

More than a match for the embarkation officers, he stormed the gangway of the packet boat and entrenched himself behind a plateful of chicken and some very fat ham in the saloon. After a happily calm crossing he landed in the early evening, not at Boulogne, but at Dieppe, and towards midnight found a train which deposited him in Rouen between two and three in the morning of Wednesday, 2nd September.

The city was full of Belgian refugees and it was only after several attempts that he managed to get into an hotel—the Grand Hotel du Nord—"where," he says, "I persuaded the concièrge to let me in and lie down in the salon—which he did, after some mysterious expostulation which turned out afterwards to mean that there was a lady there already. So, feeling a little like the hero of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, I took one end of the room, as

far as possible from her, and found the benefit of Miss Thomson's rug."

The second of September was the anniversary of his father's death in 1889 and it is characteristic of Laurie that his first visit was not to the Red Cross Headquarters, but to St. Ouen to mark the remembrance with prayer.

Fear of a German attack had driven the British General Hospital from the city, but Laurie joined forces with a subaltern and a party of men just down from the Front and set off to follow it. For two and a half days they shared a cattle truck with the friendly officers of a French Regiment of Engineers. Laurie celebrated Holy Communion in the train on the Sunday, slept in his rug, and made Oxo and turtle soup on his little stove. He was already becoming the hardened campaigner.

That week-end was decisive for the Allies. By Saturday 5th Marshall Joffre had drawn up plans for a counter attack advised by the then virtually unknown Major Gamelin. General Gallieni, the Military Governor of Paris, drove his reservist troops to the battlefield in taxis and buses, and launched them against the German right flank. The Retreat from Mons was over; the Battle of the Marne had begun.

Laurie's next letter is undated and without an address. One pictures him at the General Hospital, now located in a small French town, perhaps in the

Department of the Oise, from which straight cobbled roads, lined with poplars, radiated over the level fields, shimmering in the intense heat, "blue unclouded weather" in which war seemed unbelievable, and yet the sounds and sights of war were only too close at hand.

As the push developed, Laurie moved forward with the unit; he writes during October from the Advanced Base of the Expeditionary Force. On the whole, he was in good health, though his ankles gave him trouble, and, like many another, he suffered from attacks of dysentery. Otherwise his only personal anxiety seems to have been caused by having to witness the appalling effects of tetanus. For the rest, moved by the epic of heroism and self-sacrifice, he threw himself whole heartedly into his work. A "gentle shepherd" plaid hat and a Red Cross armlet were all that superficially distinguished him from an Anglican parson on holiday, but the inward intensity of his life can best be grasped from his own letters.

22nd October, 1914.

. . . . "I was fortunate enough to be appointed almost at once, when I got in touch with the Army, as Chaplain to one of the Royal Army Medical Corps Hospitals, which follow in the wake of the striking force. To such movable hospitals come the wounded men from the field; those who are able to

travel are sent on to a general or more permanent hospital, while those who cannot travel are treated at once. Consequently, my work has been, and is, exclusively among the severely, and in large numbers of cases the mortally wounded. You can readily understand how responsible, and in one sense how exacting, it is; but it is quite impossible for you to realise the reaction of the wonderful patience and endurance of the man upon the Priest. I have always felt, of late years, in a dim way, that the Passion of Christ was the *last* word of life and of terrestial experience, but never until now have I realised it as the perpetual, great Fact, the constantly enwrapping atmosphere of human things. Continual association with death has somewhat altered my standard: the frequent, almost the constant, transfiguration of the sordidness and wretchedness of bodily suffering into heroic endurance, making it the medium of liberation of the innate glory of man, has made the crucifix appear to be the symbol, not of the exceptional, but of the normal, I had almost written the commonplace, of life. It has appeared to me as cleansing and revealing the innate stuff that is in man, voicing his inarticulate, semi-conscious manhood, until, not the pity of it, but the glory of it, becomes the underlying and uplifting truth. I do not think this is a mere transitory mood of passing idealistic emotion. It is borne in upon me increasingly as time goes on. It gathers articulate expression,

like the sound of outbreaking waters, until it seems to me immeasurable, manifold, the illuminating truth of life.

A single example will make more clear what I mean. It is taken at first thoughts from many similar experiences. One of our own R.A.M.C. orderlies, a lad of twenty, was brought in some days ago badly wounded. Three months ago he was probably to all appearance a very ordinary, happy-go-lucky, unheroic 'Tommy,' unknown to others, probably to himself, and inarticulate in his religion. And then the Cross came. In a recent action the situation was so serious, and the position so exposed, that the officer commanding the R.A.M.C., realising the danger of ministering to the wounded under such heavy fire of the enemy, would not issue a command, but called for volunteers. This lad was in charge of a water-cart, and, thinking evidently of the importance of his charge, elected to go forward. Scarcely had he reached the top of the hill when a shell killed both his horses and wounded him; nevertheless, instead of seeking safety, wounded as he was, he set about binding up the wounds of his comrades, until the next shell laid him beside them. Left for long before he could be recovered, the deadly tetanus germ had made his case almost hopeless from the first, when at last he was brought to us. Yet, even then, there were farther depths to sound, for in his rough, hastily-improvised ward, out

in the open, he always thought of his comrades before himself, and in taking food or drink he would ask that the others might be served before him, and this quite simply and because, as he put it, 'he took so long.' His courage lasted to the end, and not long before his death he *sang*, not the last hymn of the sentimental novelists' ideal, but, as I think in recognition of the extraordinary kindness and patience of the brother orderly told off to wait on him, 'For he's a jolly good fellow.' This was the inarticulate finding voice in its own language, and I am sure, I may dare to say, that that pathetic quavering death-song, however grotesque it might seem to others, was listened to with the loving smile of understanding and recognition by the Great Sufferer Himself. It was all sad beyond words, but it was glorious as well, and as next day we laid him to rest, with as many of his comrades as could be spared around him, as I stood by the side of the great trench, with the final quivering notes of the 'Last Post,' sounded by a weeping bugler-boy, dying away, and saw the glorious crimson of the setting sun flooding the wide prospect with its red stain, it was impossible not to feel with a sense of splendour that the Blood of the Passion was the explanation and the hope. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.'"

II

Snow was on the ground when Laurie left France at the end of November. The General Hospital had been closed, and his last four weeks had been spent nearer the fighting line, as our armies moved slowly northward through a countryside pitted and scarred by artillery fire. His experience had brought him a deep fulfilment, but though he threw himself devotedly into parish work, the thought of the war obsessed and unsettled him. "For myself," he wrote in March, "I confess that the call of the field and of the hospital tent sounds tent sounds continually in my ears. . . . . The restlessness of this great Spring of 1915 is of God." Then in April the authorities wrote inviting him to undertake a year's chaplaincy. He had never considered this a possibility, but outward circumstances (always important factors in Laurie's apprehension of God's providence) opened the way, and by June he was at Aldershot with the 13th Division of the New Army waiting to be sent abroad. This was not to remain his unit for long; at the end of the month he wrote from what is almost certainly the Ypres salient—probably from St. Jean. The 4th Division to which he was now attached had been taking part in the second Battle of Ypres and there were many casualties, including gas cases—the first gas attack having taken place on April 22nd of that year.

12th Field Ambulance, 4th Division,
British Expeditionary Force,
"Somewhere in France."

". . . After several changes, I have been definitely posted to the advanced dressing station of this Field Ambulance. The duty of the Ambulance is to collect the wounded from the field, give them first-aid, and send them to more secure positions in the rear. The collecting has to be done mainly at night, as the position is under both rifle and shell fire. The wounded are brought by the stretcher-bearers to various collecting stations—" dug-outs," as they are called—behind the trenches. They are then brought to be dressed at the advanced dressing stations; from this point the motor ambulances take them to the clearing hospital, and from thence they go down to the base hospitals. The system is wonderfully well-organised, and everything is so arranged that there will be the smallest possible delay in effective treatment. There has been no German attack during the last few days, so that the numbers have been easily dealt with, but some days ago no fewer than fifteen hundred had to pass through the Ambulance in one day.

In addition to the ambulance work, I have to minister to certain of the troops who occupy the trenches immediately on our front. Here again the cheeriness, the good humour, and the courage are

alike remarkable. Men go from their football to the trenches, and from the trenches to their football, with the same zest, the same good-humoured badinage, as if they were the same thing. Yet there is no indifference to the deeper aspects of things. I had my first experience of Parade Services under shell fire on Sunday last, when you were all probably worshipping in the old familiar surroundings at Old S. Paul's. I thought of you, and it was strange how far off the old place seemed to be; yet the earnestness and attention of the men, the heartiness of their responses, the pathetic ardour of their hymn-singing, made clear the reality of their religious feeling.

I know one noble church near this spot where, amidst the most complete destruction, the Figure of our Lord alone survives above the Altar. There is a prevalent feeling among the soldiers of the supernatural protection of those symbols. Whether this is so or not, I, of course, cannot say; but it is certainly the case that the preservation of those vivid memorials of our Lord's Great Sacrifice helps to inspire and maintain that extraordinary feeling of exaltation, which is one's greatest support and strength in the presence of this constant danger. In the rabbit warren of "dug-outs," with shells and rifle bullets more or less continually threatening death, one walks about with the sense of protection which must have been the possession of "the three

Holy Children as they praised the Lord in the furnace of fire," or of Daniel in the lions' den—the sense that we are resting upon the Divine protection, and that always underneath are the Everlasting Arms. It is difficult to convey this sense of exaltation in words, but it is very real and it is our great support."

III

Laurie now made his acquaintance with the two regiments he came to love so well and with which he served until his promotion—violently resisted—to be Senior Chaplain in the 30th Division in October 1917, the 1st Hampshire Regiment and the 1st East Lancashire Regiment. " It was in the late Summer of 1915 that we first met him," wrote a correspondent in the Lancashire Regimental Journal, " The Ypres Salient, with all its attendant horrors, had just been exchanged for the then comparatively peaceful regions of Picardy. His slight build, pale countenance, and somewhat ' far-away ' expression (he was very short-sighted) gave a first impression of some one that must be cared for and protected, but it was not long before we realised that the reverse was the true state of affairs, and that it was we ourselves who were being looked after. It would be difficult to say how it all started—perhaps it was those simple Sunday evening services held in the front-line dug-

outs at Hamel in the valley of the Ancre. The bald fact alone remains: he had hardly been with us a few days before his fascinating personality had made him the confidant of every officer and man in the Battalion."

In the letters which follow Laurie describes vividly the life in and out of the trenches during the winter and spring of 1915-1916. The appalling discomfort, weariness and over-work are accepted without complaint; and it is only between the lines of matter of fact statement that we glimpse the amazing courage of the man. It almost seems as if he did not know what fear was.

Professor Brash of Edinburgh University, who has given invaluable help in editing these letters, and to whom the identification of places is mainly due, suggests that Laurie was writing from either Acheux or Forceville, the 4th Division having been withdrawn from Ypres about this date and sent, via Doullens, to the Beaumont-Hamel sector.

It would appear from the address on the following letter that the Division was on the point of moving from the Hamel area, but the improvised Theatre referred to may well have been situated in Auchonvillers or Mailly-Maillet.

12th Field Ambulance, 4th Division,
British Expeditionary Force
23rd July, 1915.

". . . There has been considerable activity on our front, much more, I think, than is realised at home. For example, I noticed some days ago that the Home Press dismissed with about half a dozen lines of notice an Infantry attack on our part, which, though it gained us the ground desired, cost us about 1,500 casualties. This took place immediately upon our front, and during the counter attack the Germans shelled our advanced dressing station, though fortunately our unit had no casualties. Our Division has been withdrawn to another part of the line, consequently for some days the sound of the guns was happily distant, but that is over now. The journey has been an experience I would not willingly have missed. The long brown line of marching men stretching out in front, patiently " foot-slogging " it, as their trenchant expression goes, their weariness only indicated by the alacrity with which they seize on the occasional rest as the day goes on; the curious hush that comes over everyone as the evening falls, so that one is conscious of a silence even beneath the tramp, tramp of the weary feet; the cheery bustle of the camp fires for the evening meal, and then the great silence and the lying out under the starlight, lulled to sleep by the calm of the great distances of

God, until the waking again in the fresh morning to the dewy grass and the birds' incessant calling and the great Rose of Dawn. It would never have entered into my mind but for the personal experience how continual and how curious are the demands made upon the men's endurance, apart altogether from the actual hardships of the trenches and the sufferings of the wounded. It is no wonder that they long for leave. The sights and the sounds are equally terrible to any person of even average sensitiveness. It is needless to go at length into details, but during the late action, as the wounded streamed into our advanced dressing station, with every kind of surgical operation immediately necessary, with the place like an indescribable shambles, one's whole nature cried out against this ugly savagery which lurks beneath the thin skin of our civilisation.

I am struck afresh, as I remember I was last autumn, with the readiness of the response the men make to my religious ministrations. One goes from stretcher to stretcher saying a few words about the honourable nature of their wounds, of the union with the Passion of God which such obedience to duty inevitably brings, of the opportunity now open to them for the realisation and increase of that union by their penitence and resolution, and then of the tenderness and strength of the Blessing of the Crucified by the hands of His Priest, or perhaps, if

they are able, the peace of the Blessed Sacrament—then they are ready with extraordinary gratitude and courage for any operation or painful treatment. And the public Services show the same ready response. I wish it were possible to convey to you all the inspiration of a Celebration of the Blessed Sacrament in the open field, amidst the booming of guns and the bursting of shells. The kneeling figures in long ranks of officers and men—sometimes General and Staff, Private and N.C.O., all side by side in a common equality of reverence before God—all of us conscious that for some at least it is the last Communion on earth, and all, with the devotional intensity of a conscious death-bed, commending their souls to God. It is of no importance that the Altar is probably only a bale of hay or an empty packing case; that the only appointments, recalling the familiar Church usages, are the white linen, the holy vessels, and the cassock and surplice of the Priest. The wide sky is more full of inspiration than the finest Cathedral roof, the waving trees are Nature's reredos, and the booming of the guns have a deeper and more significant undertone than the finest organ ever built. The other day, after the blood and dirt and rags of the poor fellows in the dressing station, we went on the march, away from it all.

We had to wait early one morning—while you would all still be asleep—outside a little,

irregular, mediæval town*, perched on a hill, surrounded by its old walls, its Renaissance buildings mounting to an eminence, where the quaint old square has a noble sixteenth century church, occupying one side. After I had been in to say my prayers (not forgetting you all at home) I came out into the fresh morning air, and saw framed through an old Gothic arch, the wide Campagna, stretching out below for many miles, with winding rivers and distant heights, looking in the soft air like the background of a Perugino picture, and as I stood absorbed there came a little gentle tinkle, tinkle of a bell, and an old grey-haired Priest in white robes, carrying the Blessed Sacrament to some sick person, passed me, preceded by a little bare-headed boy in his school pinafore, carrying a lighted lantern and the little bell, and such an awed look on his sweet little face. I had been feeling vaguely the healing relief of the wide beauty of the landscape, conscious of the loving movement of God beneath the many folds of His robe of nature, but as I knelt bare-headed and the Host passed by, it was so clear that the essential key to the whole experience, both appalling and uplifting, was some such simple faith and trust as one saw in the solemn face of the little child. And it is this which, perhaps not consciously, but quite really, the "Tommies" feel. It is the

*"Probably between Watou and Steenvoorde, within sight of Mont des Cats."

reality of action, as though they find their sense of God—as indeed they do—more by " doing " than by thinking. Many a thing do I learn from them when I go down in the evening after their last meal and before " lights out," and lie among the men on the grass, sometimes reading to them from Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* and listening to their comments, or talking over some matter of common interest."

[*Probably from Hamel on the Ancre, four miles north of Albert, and between Beaumont, Hamel and Thiepval.*]

30th August, 1915.

". . . Life in a " dug-out " is a new experience to me. Nothing would apparently be less attractive than to live in a hole in the ground, where you are bound to share the companionship of rats and spiders, to say nothing of the multitude of little frogs which abound in those parts. Yet rats and spiders and frogs become quite tolerable comrades when contrasted with the 8-inch " coal-boxes," as the biggest shells we have got here, so far, are called. If the choice lies between rats and shrapnel you are not long in accepting the comparative comfort of the rats, so that the dug-outs have their desirable side, strange as it may appear. If I try to make you realise my dug-out, I am certainly not hampered with necessity for a wealth of descriptive power. A hole

in a railway cutting, about six feet square and four feet high (I never appreciated before the advantages of being rather less tall than the average man). The furniture consists of a camp bed (which I am unusually fortunate in possessing, as otherwise, lying immediately on the ground, I would be in still more intimate contact with the minor horrors of war) a chair, a table, and a shelf. There are advantages that might easily be overlooked in the restricted space. It is a great gain to be able to reach out your arm and be able without moving your position to get at everything in your house, and you certainly are not troubled with any great niceties of house-cleaning, besides other compensations, which make a dug-out by the new war standard of comfort a really attractive and desirable residence.

The deserted village outside of which our dug-outs are situated is gradually becoming a complete ruin, as it is being shelled continuously. It is pitiful to watch the growing desolation of the place. The church still stands though already semi-ruinous, only three of the stained-glass windows remain, and they are riddled with shrapnel; the tower has been struck several times, and there is a great hole in the roof. Curiously enough, here as in so many other places, the great Crucifix opposite the pulpit, though fixed to a pillar immediately below a shell hole, is absolutely intact—almost the only thing left now in the church undestroyed. It is always inspiring to

me, when I go in at night after the shelling has abated and it is safe to enter. The moonlight streams in through the empty windows and lights up the pale face of the Christ, waiting so patiently, as though the last word had not yet been said. I sometimes fancy that the very desolation is significant, and that the broken church, with windows open to the whole world, containing only the untouched Crucifix, is a symbol of the central and the last lesson of human life.

My work consists in looking after five battalions, practically a congregation of 5,000 men. Three Regiments are always in the trenches, one always behind in "support," and one farther back in "rest." They are alternately "in" and "out." For those who are "out" I have Parade Service, followed by Celebration of the Holy Communion, in three different places each Sunday. For those who are "in" I have Service in the trenches, sometimes in large dug-outs, sometimes in a narrow, crowded trench. The dug-outs are best for my purpose; one in particular can hold as many as fifty men at once, while one can only get about twenty grouped together in a trench. The dug-outs are safer also, as a rule, for gathering the men together in numbers. The other night, as we were all very earnestly and very lustily singing "Abide with me" in the long, low, dark dug-out, crowded with men, rifle in hand, waiting to "stand to" at the parapets, and only

dimly seen by the light of two or three candles, a shell struck the heavily sand-bagged roof; we who were down below were quite uninjured, but some half-dozen men on the surface were more or less badly wounded. I attained a very easily-earned reputation as a doctor on that occasion in dealing with the wounded, having a smattering of medical knowledge which comes in very useful indeed on occasions.

This place is quieter, I am glad to say, than the Ypres salient which our Division has just left. There is constant sniping, of course, and frequent attacks on the trenches with trench mortars, rifle grenades, and machine guns from the German lines, but so far there has been no infantry attack on either side, though I suppose that state of affairs won't last long.

It is wonderful to see how cheery the men in the trenches are in all weather conditions—sometimes after torrential rain, when they are up to the knees in water and their clothes sopping wet; and not only do they hold on cheerfully, but they seem to be so little the worse of it physically. As for spirit, they are wonderful, careless of danger in an extraordinary degree. The other night I went out to a listening post in front of the trenches, after a Service, with a young subaltern of the regiment that was "in," and, in order to point out to me the way through the barbed wire, he vaulted over the parapet and walked out through the wire towards the German lines. A score

of rifles were turned on him as he came back in the half light, and only a little saving uncertainty on the part of the officer in command kept him from being riddled with bullets by his own men, and, on being met with a storm of reproach on his return, he was only amused! This boy has already won the Military Cross for bravery, and he is fairly typical of the average subaltern in spirit, and they belittle their doings so! One lad who has been through the whole campaign described the situation to me the other day as being made up of "months of intolerable boredom, punctuated by moments of intense fear." They never betray the fear, though, however much they may feel it. Then, when the tension is relaxed somewhat and they go to the village behind to "rest" for a week, they are just like irresponsible schoolboys. Last week the Rifle Brigade was commemorating the "birthday" of the Regiment while "in rest," and it was difficult to believe that we were within five miles of the German lines. All the fun of the fair, fast and furious, was the order of the day—Aunt Sally, "three shies a penny," comic bicycle riders, "Tommies" masquerading as charming young ladies, in addition to more serious trials of strength and endurance, and every one, generals and privates, as happy as the day was long, save that I saw the commanding officer keeping an anxious eye for hostile aircraft, which by signalling to their artillery, might have brought

about dire results, as the whole Battalion was crowded into comparatively small space.

I was coming up the other night from the trenches, where I had been burying some men, in pitch darkness, for it was not possible even to strike a match without danger of being seen and fired at. The road was impassable by day but possible at night. I had just got to the bend of the road, feeling my way in the darkness, when suddenly one of the German " flares " went up some hundreds of yards away, silhouetting me upon the hill and making clear down to the smallest shadow every object on the road. As I shrank into the bank for shelter from the rifle bullets, with the rattle of the machine gun making me catch my breath as if plunged into cold water, the livid green light was significant to me of the new light on life, which immediate contact with danger brought."

3rd October, 1915.

". . . I wonder if it would interest you to know, in greater detail, what a Sunday out here is like? It is a great contrast to my ordinary Sunday at Old S. Paul's. First, I tumble out of bed about 6 o'clock to bathe and dress in the open! There is a great and wholesome publicity about the life here. This morning, for example, taking my bath on the road-side, I had an animated conversation with a passer-by, while attired simply and airily in my birthday robe,

and neither of us felt it to be unconventional in the least! After I am ready, follows the first Celebration of the day, at 7 o'clock, in a cellar of one of the houses in the deserted village. No house above ground is safe from shell-fire here, and, therefore, no large company of men can be gathered together. The cellar, apart from its entrance staircase, has no other space through which air and light may come, except a hole which has been pierced to the outer surface to afford exit in the event of the house being blown down and burying us in the ruins. There is no light except the glimmer of day which comes from this hole and the light of the two candles on the improvised Altar—a table with a service blanket as Altar Frontal. The two candles (set in egg cups as candlesticks) light the standing Crucifix, the holy vessels, and the white linen of my old private Communion set from home. The roof is vaulted, as if it were a crypt chapel, and often as an officer and private kneel side by side in the feeble light and stretch out their hands reverently for the Holy Food —conscious of the slender thread upon which their lives hang—I have a feeling as though it were a primitive Celebration of the Eucharist in the Catacombs of ancient Christian days. After this Service, I mount, sometimes a horse, sometimes a bicycle, and laden with cassock and waterproof, hymn sheets and Communion bag (until, I am sure, I must look more like the White Knight in *Alice in*

Wonderland than anything else) I ride back some six miles to the Regiment in "rest," where at 9 o'clock, I have a Parade Service, which is attended usually in this instance by the whole Battalion. The men form a hollow square, in the midst of which I stand; in the background is an old French château,* which is the Headquarters, while in front is the ancient park studded with fruit trees, and beyond, a dense wood and the blue sky. The riveted attention of the men is most inspiring, and their eagerness is shown in the fact that, on last Sunday, for instance, though the Parade Service was voluntary and no man need attend unless he liked, practically the whole Battalion was present. After the Parade Service follows a Celebration of the Holy Communion. I vest in the open field. The Sergeant-Major procures a little table for me from somewhere, which is set under a tree, and there the Holy Mysteries are celebrated and the Holy Food dispensed to the rows of worshippers kneeling on the grass behind the Priest.

This Service over, I hastily pack up again and ride to the next village,† where another Regiment of the Brigade is quartered—one-half being always in the trenches and one-half out. Here the numbers are necessarily smaller, and we are able to get into a large barn, divided in the centre by a low wall, as all the barns are here, which serves me for a pulpit and afterwards for an Altar. The floor is strewn with

* Bus-les-Artois?

† Bertrancourt?

straw, and light comes in only from the open door. As this village is near to the Brigade Headquarters, usually the General and his Staff are present, mixing with the others and taking their places at the Celebration which follows, all on the equal level of the children of God. This service over, again I mount and ride back home to the support battalion behind the trenches, where either I have series of two or more Services for the separate companies in the great cellars of the château, or, if the enemy are not shelling for the time, possibly I may get the whole Battalion together in the railway cutting in which my dug-out is situated. This Service is sometimes interrupted by shells or the appearance of enemy aircraft, but usually we manage a Parade Service of half an hour.

Then I am free for lunch, which I have in a sand-bagged shelter close at hand, and usually I have an hour's rest, lying out in the open, until the next move, which is to reach two companies of the Regiment in a wood some distance off, below a battery of our own guns,† which generally manages to get into action sometime during my address, and serves to punctuate the sentences with very full stops. This over, off I set up the long communication trench to the firing-line. It is lucky if the trench is dry. In wet weather, with no earthen bottom under the constant tramp of men, you can easily imagine how difficult it is to stumble and slip your way through

† Near Englebelmer.

a pit of mud and water. It is very trying to the patience to find that progress is so slow on the slippery ground, and you are only reconciled to it by the sound of the bullets whistling overhead, making you realise what a priceless boon after all is this muddy channel of safety.

At last one reaches the front line, and here, in the largest dug-out, as many of the men as can be spared from each company are gathered; or I may go from one dug-out to another in the separate companies' positions. The Service is the same in every case—always three or four hymns, the Confession and Absolution, some prayers, a short passage from the Gospels, and the address and Blessing. It never fails to rouse my own enthusiasm, whatever it may do to the men. The circumstances are so unique. The men have come from the parapets and go back to them; it may be for any of us our last Service; and the long, dark dug-out, where one can just stand upright and no more, packed with men all ready with rifle and equipment, holding the hymn sheets up to the occasional candle-end stuck on a stick into the wall, melts to me into a mass of eager faces, with eyes fastened earnestly upon one, seeking so plainly and so pathetically to realise their own vague impulses of worship and appeal.

When this is over, it is so dark that I can safely go up the road over the hill instead of keeping to the communication trench, and so,

finally, I get back to my last Service in the Support village. This is a voluntary Evening Service, originally intended for the Engineers and Ambulance men, but becoming more and more popular each week with the men of the Infantry Battalion as well. This is no less interesting than any of the others. It is held in the Miners' Quarters. It is really no bigger in size than a large room, but we can crush in about fifty men, all standing room being utilised. There is no room to move once we are packed in, and lately, with the advent of the cold weather, the hospitable Miners have thought it necessary to construct a roaring fire of logs, so you can imagine the state of the atmosphere at the end of the Service! In this case we mainly sing hymns, and I talk very simply. They are like little children, not at all infrequently do I see the wet eyes and furtive motions that tell how near the surface their emotions are. It's a strange picture if you can reconstruct it to yourselves. Outside is the pitch darkness, relieved only by the German flares and star shells, the occasional roaring of big guns, and the more or less incessant rattle of machine gun and rifle fire. The trenches I have just left behind are lined with silent, heavily-cloaked figures, rifle in hand, keenly watching at the parapets, the silence punctuated only by the bursting shells and the cruel whistle of the rifle bullets; and then here in this close room, seen by the dancing flames of the firelight and the guttering candles, the massed bronzed faces—some so pathetic-

ally youthful—and the sound of the hymns of their childhood, charged with memories of home and friends, drowning the sinister noises of the guns. It is a picture which does not easily fade from the mind.

This is my last Service, and I am not sorry to get back to supper and to bed. My bed is out in the open, for I fear I have to confess that the rats have been too much for me, and though I have my dug-out to fly to in case of need, I very seldom sleep there. It is much nicer to go to sleep with the stars above one, rather than the close roof of my hole in the chalky ground. So, my Sunday done, I lie and go over the details of the day and think of you all at home and watch the lighting up of the sky to the flashing of the guns, or pick out the alternate duels of the machine gun fire. The security and luxury of a comfortable bed is intensified tenfold out here. How often have I gone to bed at home without the faintest sense of tthe enormous structure upon which our comfort and security is built! I daresay you do that at home even now, but if you would come out with me some night, through the wire entanglements, to a post where one has to move as noiselessly as a cat and find at last, behind some yards of battered brick wall, the little patrol of country lads, watching with lynx-eyed care the slightest variation of the shadows or unusual movement of the bushes, where the snapping of a twig may mean rifle fire and death, you would realise how hardly held and how costly

security really is. It is when one sees them face to face under those conditions that one begins to grasp how noble and dignified the lives of those simple country lads have become in their devotion to duty and their willingness to sacrifice all for it. Only a few nights ago, a boy of nineteen years, out on patrol duty, saw his sergeant fall, and, heedless of his own danger, ran out from his cover to bring him in. As a matter of fact, the sergeant was able to crawl in unassisted, but the poor lad who, unhesitatingly, went to save him, got a bullet through his head and was instantaneously killed.

But to return. In the accentuated luxury of my camp-bed under the stars the night wears on—sometimes even the thunder of the guns from the battery close by can't waken me; at other times I lie and think of you all at home, and wonder how you all are and what you do and a hundred other things. Then comes the dawn and the swallows darting and calling overhead—there is a colony of them near my bed—and then very soon the whirring of the aeroplanes and the rapid firing of the anti-aircraft guns, and possibly I lie and watch, as I did a few mornings ago, a duel between two opposing aeroplanes, the sound of the machine guns up in the sky being so quaint a contrast to the twittering of the birds. Only last week one of the enemy aeroplanes was brought down close to where we were—so close that I thought for a moment it would fall upon me. Our plane came so swiftly and suddenly out of a cloud

upon the German that the whole thing was the work of a few moments—with a sickening rush the German plane came down and fell with a crash that was worse to hear than the bursting of a shell. Fortunately we found that the aviators had been shot and killed before they fell. One was young—and had the Iron Cross. The manly courage of those aviators is as indescribable as the risks they take."

[This aeroplane fell on the road near Forceville on September 30th.]

29th October, 1915.

". . . I'll try to give you a rough idea of the work to be done during the week as I tried last month to tell you of the work to be done on Sundays. Monday and Tuesday are spent almost entirely in the trenches. I go up through the long communication trench, the entrance to which is about a quarter of a mile perhaps behind the firing line. It's a happy thing if the weather is dry or the trench is laid with wooden paving. In wet weather the discomfort is almost indescribable. It has been raining steadily for the last four days, and both the roads approaching the trenches and the trenches themselves are a sea of liquid mud—often nearly up to the knees in depth. The rain beats pitilessly, as there is absolutely no cover except in the dug-outs. One's clothes get soaked and caked with mud. One's feet are always cold, and after days of this, without

taking off clothes or boots, you can imagine how difficult it is to be cheerful. I had to pick my way back last night, for example, for over a mile in a sea of mud after two miserable days. It was pitch dark. I had to strike a match often to see I was not walking into a trench or shell hole. I was soaked through to the skin, and when I got home, I had to face undressing and going to bed in bitter wind and pelting rain. I tell you this to show you what those brave fellows in the trenches have to put up with, now, as the weather breaks. In my own case it's a mere nothing, but to do this for eight days on end, which is the least of the periods for which a man is "in," and then only to have "support duty" as a relief, which is little if anything better, save that the dug-outs are a shade more comfortable, and then to have to go "in" again, perhaps never having clothes or boots off, save for a moment to "change" (and, alas! not much to change with), always wet more or less, is, as I said, a condition which is indescribable; it must be experienced to be realised. And there are all the incidental discomforts besides to be reckoned with: the constant danger of bursting shells and trench mortar bombs, or the still more terrible "aerial torpedoes," as they are called—a German self-directing shell filled with high explosive; the ever-watchful sniper, always waiting for you if you get tired of standing in mud and water and climb up too erectly on to the firing platform; and worst of all to my mind is the relentless machine gun.

Shells you have a chance of dodging, but the raking, persistent fire of a machine gun is incredibly, cruelly, pitilessly nerve-racking.

There are a hundred other discomforts that cannot be told. You try to heat your tea in the early morning at a little fire made in the trench wall or in the dug-outs with little scraps of such wood as you may have picked up while on patrol duty the night before, the acrid smoke blinding you the while; you sit in the mud, perhaps on the firing platform, for your meal; you stand for hours in one position till every limb must ache; or you go out with a working party, wiring in front of the trenches, or lie for hours on the wet ground at a " listening post," in constant danger of your life. If you are a " temporary sleeper," waiting to relieve the sentry at the parapet, you lie on the firing platform in rain and mud, covered only with your overcoat, and try to sleep, until the time when, weary-eyed, you take his place, your loaded rifle over the parapet edge, waiting always more or less alert, straining at the slightest movement or suspicious shadow—if there is light enough to cast a shadow.

It is impossible to tell all the discomforts of trench warfare; but you will marvel as you think of it, as I constantly do, at the unfailing cheerfulness of the men, at the readiness with which the light, easy joke comes spontaneously to their lips, at the comical side they see in every fresh discomfort, and at the unchanging resolve to " stick it " whatever it

may be. It is not, of course, always like that, and there are comforts as well as discomforts—comforts with an enormously enhanced value too. You at home can't begin to understand the keen pleasure to be got out of drinking a can of hot soup at midnight under such circumstances, or the zest of appetite with which the steaming stew is attacked at mid-day, brought piping hot up to the very firing line. You don't know what comradeship means until you have roughed it for months like this, side by side, and noted the unconscious, almost girlish, tenderness shown in such crude and rough-and-ready ways, but so obviously sincere as to have often brought me near to tears—a comradeship, alas! too often rudely broken, leaving a warm-hearted lad to keep his solitary watch, haunted with the memory of the shapeless bundle that is his last remembrance of the " chum " who was all in all to him. There are occasions, too, when to a thoughtful lad (as so many of them are) the shimmering moonlight or the glory of dawn must be intensely, even if unconsciously, impressive. I feel sure that the ready response they make to religious influences is partly due to the great ideas that are forced upon their minds during those long hours of uninterrupted thought—thought, too, at its keenest, in the simple surroundings, the healthy conditions, the clear eye and the quick brain, which the life almost inevitably brings with it. I have stood with them in the early morning, leaning over the parapet, watching the rising sun turn all the

glistening dewdrops on the grass at the level of my eyes and on the barbed wire in front, to the most glorious gems; I have seen the freshness of the opening day reflected from the tired faces of the sentries at their posts, and have seen both the horror and the nobility of another day of such life so clearly, that I have been inevitably driven to prayer. At such times religion seems so easy and so natural. I can remember now the head of a boy appearing over a "traverse" in the trench on one such morning, with a halo of crimson and gold, and how in a flash the slow-moving but all-comprehensive purpose of God in the education of man was evident, and, as I prayed for the boy and for you all at home and for the whole world, it all seemed so infinitely understandable and "worth while" that the uplifting beat of the life of God could almost be felt. I am sure that the men are susceptible to such influences, too, as they so readily turn to religion.

I go from company to company, the officers of each company being invariably hospitable and welcoming. The men are gathered in the dug-outs or in the trench, and in this way I manage to get round the battalions that are "in." Sometimes the Service is interrupted, as it was, for example, last Monday, when just as we were beginning in one part of the line, in a space at the junction of three trenches, a red and somewhat breathless Major came along and stopped me, as the enemy were very active. Lucky for us, too, that he

did, for we had scarcely moved off when a shell came into the very place, unhappily killing one man, but happily missing all the others, who else would have been in similar danger. Nearly always, however, we can get into dug-outs which are safer, though when packed with men in sodden clothes, looking more like bundles of muddy rags than soldiers, one pines for the lofty roof of Old S. Paul's! I get every facility, day and night, for work among the men—a dug-out to sleep in if I am there at night and the most genuinely sympathetic co-operation all round. The officers, all of them, are marvellous, but the Junior Subalterns most of all. They don't seem to know what fear is, and in the main are such that the men would follow them anywhere. I am convinced that they, more than any other class, are of the most supreme importance to the success of the campaign. Their resourcefulness is extraordinary. I went out the other night with one to an outpost near an old deserted mill which is on neutral ground, sometimes occupied by the Germans, sometimes by ourselves.* It was a glorious moonlight night, the trees in the wood through which we had to go, stripped of their leaves, shone with a hazy effect of silver light that was mysterious and fairy-like. The night was so still that even whispers were forbidden, and the calm stillness, in the flood of moonlight, was so impressive that one's thoughts were taken far away from war and its

* On the Ancre, near Hamel.

horrors, when on a sudden, crack! went a machine gun from the German trenches opposite, and in a moment, while I was still wondering what was happening, he had me and himself and the attendant orderly stretched out under cover I had not even realised was there, and then went crawling on all fours out to some twenty yards of the mill to reconnoitre. It sounds nothing to set down, but you need to be under machine gun fire to realise the steadiness of head, the initiative, and the self-dependence that are required, and those young lads, many of them mere children fresh from school, " play up " nobly.

The trenches only take Monday and Tuesday. On the other days I have Evening Services once every week for each of the Battalions, and an extra Celebration of Holy Communion for two of them—the regiment in " rest " and the regiment in " support." Then I have a Confirmation Class going in one of the villages, and " Sing-Songs," as the impromptu concerts are called, in two others. I have now five Recreation Rooms going in different areas, and cannot be grateful enough to the many kind friends who have already sent me out games and papers for them. As for the mouth organs, the several supplies I have received have only whetted their appetite for more: I have a mouth-organ band going in two regiments already. It's very good for them, for the more they sing and play the happier they are. They are just like very simple children, and will pass away hour after hour in absolute happiness, despite the dis-

comfort of the cold and wet, singing songs with rousing choruses, mostly pathetic and sentimental, about their mothers and their sweethearts, or perhaps patriotic, with a touch of melodrama in the patriotism, and their appetite for hymn-singing is insatiable. This fun and gaiety is a tremendous asset in our favour. If the boys stopped to think over their daily horrors they would be done for, but the very simplicity of the life is its strength. "Are they downhearted?" No! a thousand times no! Nor self-pitying, nor morbid, nor obviously heroic. Just simple children, cheerfully doing their duty.

In addition to those standing engagements, there are all sorts of incidentals—such as visiting the men in their billets, where one always finds a welcome from a very cheery crowd; looking after the sick and wounded in the dressing-station, the burials, and the care of the two rapidly-filling cemeteries we have made; the letters to be written about grave registration and to heartbroken mothers and friends; and every now and then, Nicodemus-like, a lad will come shyly by himself and talk of his personal difficulties and his desire to "get religion." It fills the time, as you can imagine, leaving little leisure for other things, even for letters that one longs to write in response to the many one receives. It is a busy and a happy life, and not altogether useless, though no doubt it could be made more telling; but I think you can rest assured that the spirit you showed in sending me out here has not been entirely unfruitful

in the effective share you would all wish to have in the great work those brave lads are doing for us. It is that same spirit of sacrifice that I meet with constantly among the men, both in trivial things and in the greatest of all, from the lad who recently gave up his slice of "plum-duff" that I might have it, to the lad who insisted the other night in walking with me along a dangerous road where we were both exposed to machine gun fire, lest I should get hit and have no one to look after me."

December, 1915.

". . . A day or two ago I was kneeling beside the stretcher on which lay a lad whose life was slowly ebbing away, but whose chief concern was to check the grief of his brother who knelt on the other side (so many of the lads have brothers serving side by side with them). It was only a few moments that they had together, as the brother had to go back to the trenches, and when I had spoken a word or two to him he mastered himself at last and turned to go. I went down with the dying boy in the swift-going, jolting ambulance, and not even his steadfast gaze as he listened to the prayers, the growing cold of the pulseless hand, the shadow of death on the mud-stained face, so clear even in the half-light of the grey-painted, closed-in car—not even the pathos of the last message to the young wife, waiting for news of him in a remote Irish village in Co. Monaghan—could blot out from my mind the enduring impres-

sion of the mud-bespattered back of the brother, as, rifle on shoulder, only his bowed head telling of his locked-up grief, he trudged steadfastly back through the mud to take the vacant place in the living wall that guards us all. In such ways they are learning that even death itself is not so great as duty.

It is not strange that death should be largely robbed of its terror to men who are so familiar with it. Living always in such danger that, as I said above, everyone feels that he is here only on sufferance, the outlook is radically modified—perhaps more by this influence than by any other. It is so little worth while bolstering up shams in the face of death, and even conventional manners that have been the recognised and familiar attitudes of the past are cast aside under the sense of closely impending death. I was having tea in a dug-out in the front line last Sunday afternoon with some Company Officers—young, happy-go-lucky lads, who would normally hate to show their religious feelings: they had had a very bad time all week from trench mortar shells. These are wretchedly nerve-racking things, fired from the German trenches into ours, and much more powerful than anything we have. They are great things, like footballs, which fortunately come so slowly that they can be seen for some sixteen seconds before they arrive, bringing about 150 pounds of explosive with them (they weigh about 200 pounds). I never realised before how much distance could be covered in sixteen seconds! We

had a man watching at the door of the dug-out to give warning of their coming, for our shelter was not proof against a direct hit. The nerves of the men I was with were clearly on edge, and I don't wonder, for the terrific explosion of those shells at close quarters is such as to try the stoutest nerves. While we were at tea, news was brought that the fifteen feet deep dug-out in which I used to hold my Services had got a direct hit, and that three men were buried. Two were got out alive, but the third was so pinned down that when at last he was got out he was quite dead. You can imagine how upsetting it was to the nerves to hear the muffled voice calling for help and then at last suddenly ceasing. The man's platoon officer, who had been with us having tea, and who had with his own hands helped to dig him out, came, as indeed did all the others, to the subsequent Service in a safer dug-out; and I could see that they were all openly and unashamed taking the attitude of little children to their religion. I have sung "O God, our help in ages past," under many strange and thrilling circumstances, but never have I felt the profound sense of appeal as I did then."

December, 1915.

"... You will be interested to hear how Christmas was observed out here. It has been a very vivid experience for me. I'm afraid it's only possible to pass on to you a mere verbal description, though,

as a matter of fact, words fail to convey a situation in which not only is every conscious sense stimulated, but intuitions so awakened and imaginations so quickened that the ideas really "break through language and escape"; however, I must do what I can.

The sense of the greatness of things; of the largeness of the Humanity of God now being revealed in those unusual relations of men; of the nearness of His Presence and Influence in the great motives and actions all around; of the more profound reality of the spiritual as opposed to the material—all these began with me just before midnight on Christmas Eve, when a little band of us—all Tommies except myself—went around the billets in this Support Village, singing the Christmas hymns. I have described the village to you before—three or four little streets radiating from the battered church, which is the centre of the place. It has been largely ruined by the constant shelling, and is consequently quite deserted by the civil population. It is held as the camp of the Support Battalion behind the front line. The men live in cellars or dug-outs, and some still use the houses and barns, where there are cellars handy into which they can go when shelling begins. The houses are all, more or less, the same: a shed on the street front; behind it a square courtyard, one side of which forms the dwelling-house, with cellars below; in the centre, the farm implements, and litter of straw and refuse. We clustered

together in the little squares, and, with the light of a brilliant moon and electric torches for the hymn sheets, we sung the old favourites, "While Shepherds watched" and "Hark! the Herald Angels sing." It was a lovely starlit night, much, I suppose, as the Syrian sky must have appeared to the wondering shepherds nearly two thousand years ago. As we sang, listening faces appeared from above and from below ground, and I have no doubt that feelings were stirred and memories were awakened, as must have brought more than one of the simple listeners near to tears; so much, indeed, was evident from the fervour of the thanks showered on us. We got round all the companies at last, and to bed some time after midnight. I lay awake for a long time under the stars, with my mind on the many Christmas Eves of the past, and the strangeness of this last, and awoke again long before the dawn broke. It was then that I heard the faintest little melody, far away, coming from the German trenches; it was, so far as I could make out, just one little pipe playing a poignantly sad and yet an exquisitely sweet little melody, as if the tragedy of Christmas on the battlefield possessed the player. It had an almost unearthly character, so faint and far away and plaintive was the music. I found myself irresistibly recalling R.L.S.'s lines: "Small the pipe, but, oh! do thou peakfaced and suffering piper, blow therein the dirge of heroes dead, and to those sick, those dying, sound the triumph over death. . . . So is pain cheered, death

comforted, the House of Sorrows smiles to listen." Nothing could have been more apposite at the time, for indeed, the angels' song over the cradle of the Holy Child is the only note of hope in this grim Christmas.

Six o'clock came, however, and it was no longer possible to lie and rhapsodise, as the Support Company's dug-out, in which the first Celebration was to be held, was a good quarter of an hour away along a muddy communication trench. As I set out my things there in the comparative cleanness of the Reserve Company, I feared at first that no one was coming, but before the hour the men trooped in from the various working parties in which they had been engaged, muddy and tired and wet and cold, carrying their rifles and ammunition belts; grimy face and hands, and wearing every imaginable headgear—more and still more, till every available inch was crammed, and there was no room for anyone, not even the Celebrant, to kneel, but all perforce must stand. Even so, it was difficult enough for me to wedge my way carrying the sacred vessels from one to another, and often in the semi-darkness all I could distinguish were the reverently thrust forward hands into which I placed the Holy Food. This Service over, off again I set along the muddy way, with "A Merry Christmas, Padre"—"A Merry Christmas, boys," sounding all along the line until I reached the biggest dug-out of the front-line trenches. As I came along, the men were singing the "Adeste

Fideles" on the fire-step of the front line. I made my way to the little hole, through which one had almost to crawl, and found a goodly number waiting. In this dug-out it was possible to kneel, though not possible to stand upright; a long, narrow, roughly-timbered tunnel, with a glowing coke stove at one end forming the reredos for my Altar—itself a pile of damp sand-bags—and behind me, the long vista of kneeling figures tapering off into darkness at the end. In front knelt the devout Colonel, whose every gesture bespoke his reverence, and then officers and men, kneeling side by side, leaving just a little space between them for me to go from one to the other. It was inexpressibly touching and inspiring. Only once before, and that in Bethlehem itself, have I realised so greatly the majesty and mystery of our Christmas Preface as I repeated it then, in a stillness that could be felt: "Because Thou didst give Jesus Christ Thine only Son to be born as at this time for us; Who, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, was made very Man of the substance of the Virgin Mary His Mother." It was so clear that here was at once the key to, and the goal of, the endurance of those kneeling figures, stretching out their mud-stained hands (some, alas! so soon to be cold in death) for the blessed Communion with the full-rounded Manhood of God. . . . This over, with the rain now falling heavily, and knee-deep in mud, back I went to the Support Village for the Celebration there. Here, risking the

shells, we chose the comparative cleanness and comfort of a sand-bagged house, where, although already the mud had stained the snowy whiteness of the linen, it was possible at least to kneel at ease for the Holy Mysteries. It was light by the time the Service here was over, and as soon as I had packed up I was able, fortunately, to get a lift in the first ambulance that took the sick and wounded behind the lines to the Headquarters of the Field Ambulance some eight miles back, dropping me en route at the Rest Village. Here in the temporary Cinema Theatre, which a kindly Divisional Staff has erected for the men, we began with a Parade Service—what would be called at home " a rousing Service "—the place packed with men, eager to sing the Christmas hymns and recall the Christmas Story. Never before have I experienced the extraordinary effect of hearing " Christians, awake," sung by a great body of men, and sung with a heartiness that I have never known excelled. It was an inspiring time; the long barn filled with rank upon rank of closely-packed men, faces shining, equipment polished, clothes brushed, everything the very opposite of their comrades in the trenches, and I privileged to stand before them on the stage and tell the old simple Christmas Story of how God so loved the world. An unforgettable time. This Service over, again there followed a Celebration of the Holy Sacrament—the theatre stage being the Altar and the bare earth the Altar kneeler. In this case, of course, there were

larger numbers than ever—General, Subaltern and private together in one common democracy of worship receiving the Holy Food. By the time this Service was over and greetings exchanged, the ambulance car was at the gate on its return journey, waiting to drop me at the next rest village, where another Battalion of the Brigade is quartered when out of the trenches. This Service also had a character all its own, for here there was no place available but a barn that was still used as a stable—mud walls and open beams, deep new straw upon the floor, holes in the sides through which the poultry and the farm dogs wandered in and out during the Service, and the light coming mainly through a great shell hole in the ramshackle roof through which one could see a large expanse of a now unclouded sky. Here, again, we commenced with a Parade Service and the Christmas hymns. Poor and mean as the surroundings were—perhaps, indeed, just because of those surroundings and the memory they held for us of one of the "boys" who was killed there not so long ago by the same shell that now allowed the light to enter for our worship—as they knelt to receive their Communion, all ranks together, row upon row, in the deep sweet-smelling new straw, I felt nearer to the manger at Bethlehem than in the most stately ritual that I have ever shared in, in the grandest Cathedrals of Europe, not even in dear Old S. Paul's itself, though you may be sure it was not forgotten. This over, on to a bicycle at once, and back to the Support

Village where I usually live, where I found quite half the Battalion gathered together in our new Theatre, created by the knocking together of several derelict houses, and having the questionable distinction, I think, of being the nearest Theatre to the German lines in this Division at any rate. Here, again, we sang "Christians, awake", and all the other old favourites, until I had just time to gather up my Communion Bag and necessaries and set off down the long communication trench of the Battalion, which was "in" for Christmas in the right sector of our front. After about three-quarters of an hour (so slow is progress here!) of steady ploughing through mud, sometimes up to one's thighs, where my topboots were of as much value as a pair of baby's socks, so soon did the mixture of mud and water become so deep that it overflowed the edges, and thus with about a quart of water in each boot one had to spend the rest of the afternoon! But one never notices such a little thing. When I got down to the firing trenches, I found that the Germans were actively shelling our lines—and with astonishing accuracy too—for they got the gap in the hedge through which we had to pass so neatly that they smashed up, at the very time one needed it, the only available passage way. However, at long last I got down to the great engineering triumph of this sector —a labyrinth of passages dug into the side of a bank, with at least thirty feet of chalky soil above, proof against anything save the very biggest shells of the

enemy. Here, again, it was a wonderfully picturesque experience. Again the numbers were so great that there was no room to kneel, and the worshippers had to stand in long rows facing one another, down one passage and another, branching from the central space, where, with an iron trolley as an Altar, and a single candle for light, the Holy Mysteries were celebrated. It was so dark that, as I moved along to communicate the men, the candle had to be passed from hand to hand before me. Picture the white-robed and stoled Priest (though the surplice was by this time fast losing its pristine freshness) bearing the holy vessels, stumbling against boulders and sinking into mud, down the long lane of dimly seen figures with bowed, bared heads and outstretched hands; how different from the familiar Christmas morning at Old S. Paul's! This Service over, again I set off along the fire trench to another dug-out, this time in the front-line trench, and muddy beyond description. Here I thought the men would never be done coming in, and as they came, most of them, straight from doing sentry duty at the parapets, with multitudinous muddy coats and mud-caked equipment, you can imagine how little room was left when about fifty were crushed together in that narrow space. Here my Altar was an unsteady plank stretched on two rum jars, from one side to the other, so near the muddy ground and so unstable that there was little to choose between them, as stole and surplice, even the fair linen cloths, acquired more mud than ever;

even the cruets had to be set down on the muddy floor! Still, the Great Act was performed, and the Great Communion made, and when we sang "While Shepherds watched" as an Introit, and "Hark! the Herald Angels" as a Thanksgiving, I dare say that we realised that the Babe of Bethlehem had more experience of such surroundings than of the luxuries of our modern ecclesiasticism; and, tiring as it was, it was indescribably inspiring to go from man to man (standing again, of course—no other posture being possible) and giving the Sacred Food to those whose very dirt was the token of their effort to walk, in one great respect at least, in His steps. When this was over, once more down again through the narrow, crowded, muddy trench, exchanging happy greetings as I went, to the Centre Company, acting as Reserves, whose dug-out was a large cellar under the ruins of the schoolroom of the little village through which the trenches run in this part of the line. Here one escaped the mud, but as there were two open fires of green wood, the place was filled with dense and acrid smoke. Still, here it was possible to get a table and a better supply of candles, to stand upright and to kneel; and here the vaulted roof echoed and re-echoed to the old familiar hymns, and here I gave the last Holy Food of the day—contrary, I fear, to all ecclesiastical Canons—at nearly six o'clock in the afternoon! During all this last period the Germans were vigorously shelling, and it was strange to have the old words of the Liturgy punctuated by the

bursting of whizz-bangs so close at hand; and it deepened one's thankfulness for the wonderful privileges of the day that not a single casualty had occurred as a consequence of the gathering of such masses of the men together under such conditions. The Officers of the Reserve Company took me back with them to tea, the first real meal of the day, and hospitably insisted on my "changing my feet" as we say in Scotland. You may imagine I wasn't sorry to exchange my topboots and the water they contained for dry socks and a pair of trench waders with which to return; and so, at long last, with only an occasional sniper's bullet to keep me on the alert, I got up the open road in the dark, and so back to what for the present I count home. Once more the hospitality of the Ambulance Car landed me at the Headquarters of the Ambulance, where I had been invited for my Christmas dinner. I arrived late, but with a healthy appetite for the turkey and plum pudding (really and truly!) which the enterprising Quartermaster had managed to procure. It was a day one can never forget, and when at night I got into my bed beneath the stars and went over it all again, I perceived that I was only at long last beginning to discover man—I am also beginning to see that, as a necessary prelude, this must be reached before one can discover God—and I felt humbly grateful that one's sense of the overshadowing Humanity of Christ in the world had been given greater opportunity than ever had been possible before. It had been muddy, tiring, danger-

ous, most of the accustomed conventions, even decencies, of worship had been impossible, but it had been the most real Christmas-day I had ever known."

It would appear from the address on the following letter that the Division was on the point of moving from the Hamel area, but the improvised Theatre referred to may well have been situated in Auchonvillers or Mailly-Maillet.

c/o 11th Brigade Headquarters,
4th Division,
British Expeditionary Force.
31st January, 1916.

". . . . In addition to the weekly Sing-Songs which I always have, I had to provide a Christmas Show for every Battalion in the Brigade, and even with my fairly long experience of such things, it was a little disconcerting to have to arrange the entertainment for 5000 men, and the more so as I had to make the bricks, as it were, entirely without straw. It was made so much the more easy, however, by the fact that the men were thirsting for such entertainment, and their eagerness and readiness to be amused went a long way more than half-roads to success. So I was put on my mettle—the more so, because I knew that in all human probability it was the last of such entertainments many of them would ever see. Place, time, properties, and rehearsals, all were difficult, but

" impossible " is a word very seldom used out here, and we set to work. The difficulty of place was the greatest to overcome. I got permission from the General to use the great granary of the chateau near this village—" If you shut off all lights from the German lines." (The building is the nearest to the German trenches in this neighbourhood, under both shell and machine-gun fire frequently). Here we could easily put a whole Battalion at once. There was, however, so much, not unnatural, discussion and demurring on the part of the C.O.s of the respective Battalions, that I was glad at almost the last moment to find another place, where, by knocking several partition walls down, quite a large-sized hall could be made. True, it also was in the direct line of fire, but it had the merit of being hidden from the German eyes. Then our troubles began. First, the roof was a difficulty, being riddled with holes; then the windows were all shattered, and had to be filled up; and, finally, stage and dressing-rooms had to be constructed. At last, however, all obstacles were overcome, and a long, low building emerged, with two large signboards at the entrance, " The M—— Coliseum Theatre of Varieties " and " Programme for the Week." Inside, a long cavernous-looking hall, with open timber roof and patched sides; the earthen floor heaped up and up until at the back it reached a quite reasonable " gallery " height. The triumph was the stage! After alternate teasing and coaxing of the Brigade Staff

Captain I managed to get enough wood, and very easily got a " fatigue party " for the labour. As the result, we had a really good stage five or six feet above the ground, the proscenium draped with purple and yellow art muslin, footlights made out of old biscuit tins, and the whole set off above with draped flags. All this stage carpentry had carried back my mind to the ploys of many years ago, but still more did the preparation of the items of the Programme. It called itself a " Revue," and had as its central feature a " Ballet." This was the toughest proposition of all, for you can imagine that to transform thirteen stalwart Tommies into a light and graceful troupe of ballet-dancers was not easy. The rough-and-tumble acting " Sketch " was ease itself compared with it, but after endless practices, in the most weird places and at the oddest times, we got it perfect (sic!), and when those smooth-faced boys, made-up with carmine and powder, wearing long white stockings, and short ballet skirts of art muslin and crinkled paper, decked out with bright ribbons of the most brilliant colours, appeared at last, a bevy of unfamiliar feminine youth and beauty—" Miss Gaby de Lys and her Company "—they completely brought down the house. For my part, I don't think I ever laughed so much in all my life; helpless, with tears streaming down my cheeks, I held on to the " wings ", while, with a solemn gravity which was irresistably comic in view of their elephantine gambols, and the unexpected developments conse-

quent upon the inadequacy and precarious nature of their garments, they went through their steps! It met with a storm of applause, and what with a Pierrot Troupe and a travesty of Harry Tate's Motor Sketch and various other "turns," we had not at all a bad Show. This, of course, had to be repeated to every Battalion in turn; and it was really a sight to see from the front of the long, dim barn, feebly lighted with one or two oil lamps hanging from the rafters, tier upon tier of eager faces reaching up almost to the roof, reflecting the brilliant light from the stage; in the foreground semi-circles of chairs, behind two open braziers of glowing coke, where General and Staff and the Officers of the various Battalions gathered in turn. As for enthusiasm! You don't know what "a rousing chorus" means until you hear a popular song (by choice, patriotic or sentimentally love-sick) shouted under such conditions. In addition to those more formal "Shows" there were the Christmas Battalion Concerts, in which private and subaltern vie with one another in songs, penny-whistle solos, or comic sketches. For you musn't think that they appear to take themselves, or the situation, as seriously as you do at home. They are too healthy-minded for that. The tragic side of things is not apparent until you look for it; it's certainly never waved before you, or advertised. "It's all in the day's work," is the attitude, and it's only an old "moralist and windbag" like myself who is always noting it. For me

it's always difficult to see those clean, wholesome boys still in their teens, fresh from school so many of them, only recently playing cricket and football upon the grounds of Eton or Harrow, just leaning over " the wistful limit of the world ", and to know that behind that apparent irresponsibility, as they shout their comic songs on the stage for the amusement of the men, is the tragic duty of the patrol leader, or the command of the wiring party, or the lead over the parapet. One such fellow was joking with me in the most rollicking way some days ago, just before he went out on patrol to a spot in a little wood close to an old mill, used sometimes by our men, sometimes by the Germans (whoever is there first) as an outpost, where he was immediately shot down and could not be recovered by the subsequent search party, making, alas! another item in that ominous list of " wounded and missing." Yet another went straight out from the dug-out, where we had all been having tea together in the maddest-merriest mood, and was obliged to face a German patrol single-handed, with only his revolver and a couple of bombs, but, like the gallant lad he is, he stood his ground and happily got back unhurt. Where do they get the nerve from, those inexperienced boys, sent out to us from home, sometimes never having been under fire before?—going to their dangerous tasks as lightly as if they were going to a football match! It isn't as if there were any apparent change of mood from gay to grave, but a constant cheeriness and gaiety, from the light-hearted

whistling of "Tipperary" by the whole Company as it goes "in", to the fixing up of comic pictures and humorous messages in front of the German wire, or after the fashion of a cheery little subaltern of eighteen who the other day had to be restrained from setting up his gramophone on the parapet, where he proposed to entertain the Germans with a selection from the "Pirates of Penzance." Yet you mustn't run away with the notion that this cheerfulness only indicates an incurable levity of disposition and absence of realisation; they are ready at any time for graver work. In the midst of the last preparations for a concert the other day, just as we had the Coliseum ready—lighted up with rows of candles, a background of blankets for scenery, and a sky-larking crowd of Tommies rehearsing on the stage—came the sudden news of a gas attack, and the order to "stand-to" at once. Instantly, keen and alert, officers and men were at their places, each man with his job clear, ready to face death if need be, but at any rate to carry out to the end the grim business which lies behind all this happy fooling. This, however, is fortunately only occasional; the normal atmosphere is cheeriness, not to say indifference—shells burst all round the Recreation Room without disturbing the men. The other day it was struck by one as they were playing with the games you sent out to them! The universal attitude is joke and laugh—song and chorus —"make the best of it—are we downhearted? No!!!" I think it is that very chivalrous disdain of

comfort and danger that opens up their natures so readily to the gravity of religion. They drink in their religious teaching, and those boys I have been writing of are frequent and devout in their Communions. Never once have I heard from any one of them, officer or man, a single disparaging remark about religion since I came among them.

On the day succeeding S. Paul's Day I had my first Confirmation out here. It had the unique distinction of taking place practically on the battlefield, as the village where it was held, though not quite so close as this village of ours, is yet easily within shelling range, and is often shelled—indeed, not long ago when the Germans sent over a "bouquet" of about 100 shells at once, one burst in the mess-room—near where the Confirmation was held—and killed on the spot two young officers, and wounded others, as they sat round the table at tea. In such surroundings a Confirmation has a peculiar significance, and to me certainly a character which I have never known before in all the five-and-twenty years of my ordained life. All leading up to the Service had been unique. The classes, held as the various lots of men got their relief from the trenches, and held in all sorts of places and at all times—in billets, in barns, in recreation rooms, in darkness, by candlelight, by moonlight, with my mud-stained class lying around (no such luxuries as seats for us!) but always, whatever the circumstances, listening with riveted attention, and I have never felt the value of the inspiration

religion can give to life more than I have felt it with these men. I had a class in each of the four Battalions, and had to get permission for quite half of them to come out of the trenches for the Confirmation. We met at a central village and had the baptisms first, in a recreation room, and then, forming into what was practically a platoon in numbers, we marched to the village where the Confirmation was to be held. I am always impressed at home by the solemn entrance of the Candidates into Church, as of the marshalling of a fresh contingent to the army of the Saints, but this was the real thing. I am sure none of the Templars in their best days were any more in earnest in their search for the Soldier-Saint ideal than those men were. Half of them were spick and span as they came from their billets, half of them were muddy and tired as they came straight from the fire-step, but all were solemn, resolute and earnest. I have never felt such a strange mingling of the exultant and the pathetic as, with pulses tingling and a lump in my throat, I marched with them along the muddy, high-banked country road. It was so probable, as to be almost certain, that out of so many some would soon be marching to their death, and it was so fine to feel the mingling of the courage of the soldier and the humble consecration of the disciple, and, whether they were to live or die, one realised it was a fresh stream of virile manhood deliberately assuming the obedience of the Body of Christ, so that, whether it was to be in body or in spirit, it was to His added

honour. No doubt the passer-by, seeing the rifles and equipment, thought only that they were going " in " to the trenches, and they themselves, poor lads, didn't fully realise all the din of battle with the spiritual powers which they were marching to, but they marched with a good purpose and a good heart, and I was so proud to march beside them! Arrived at last at the village, we found the " Salle-de-Réunion " where the Service was to take place, and having, in virtue of our early arrival and greater numbers, been accorded the first place, we had a little quiet before the Service began. The Bishop was the Bishop of Khartoum, whose Diocese is now in the hands of the enemy, and who has, therefore, taken up the duties of Chaplain-General at the front. He stood on the stage of the Hall, improvised quite nicely into a Chapel by a simple and dignified Altar and some hangings round the back. He spoke very simply and sympathetically to the men, and deeply impressed their already strung-up minds, and then they filed out one by one, as we do at home, and one by one went up to the step and knelt down to offer themselves, body and soul, to God's service for ever. Every one of us, from the Bishop downwards, was deeply impressed at the Laying on of Hands, and afterwards they sang the familiar hymns as only a body of troops can sing them, and at last, with kind words and greetings from the Bishop, we set off once more to the central meeting-place. Here, in the Recreation Room, we had prepared for us a great

treat—tea and tinned salmon and bread and jam and biscuits (and they did eat!) and then I said the last few words and prayers, and gave them their Memorial Crucifixes, and we sang "The Son of God goes forth to War" with a zest that might have lifted off the roof. So with those last words lingering in our minds, I gave them the Peace and Blessing, and back they went, off in the darkness, to their billets and to the parapets, to face not only the Germans, but all those principalities and powers, that spiritual wickedness in high places, of whom Germany is only the unhappy tool."

It is practically certain that this next letter was written from Lucheux, north east of Doullens, as the Division moved to that area about the 18th February.

15th March, 1916.

"... Our Brigade was taken out of the line about a month ago for "rest" after about seven months' continuous service in the trenches. Since then, we have been slowly making our way up to another point of the line which, it is rumoured, we take over this week. A large part of the time has been spent on the march, and it has given me another point of view from which to see both officers and men. There is something as revealing in relaxation as in the tense excitement of constant danger. It's what the men call "peace-time soldiering" just now, only the

far-distant booming of the biggest guns, which one can just catch when the air is still, reminds one of the grim conditions we left so gladly behind, that for the first few days of the march the men were just like boys let loose from school! To be marching with their backs turned to the trenches—even if it were only preliminary to going in at another place—was in itself so exhilarating that they found pleasure and delight in anything and everything, and if any one thinks this to be very unheroic, let him spend the winter months in bad trenches and he will more than understand.

. . . . We have come down through rolling country, thickly wooded, with the fresh young green just appearing on the shrubs and trees, giving the woods that mystical appearance which belongs to the earliest touch of spring. I shall never forget the first halt after the move-off from the trenches. We had been marching for three hours, a long serpent of khaki, winding steadily along the roads, up the hills, down into the dales—whistling, singing, joking, laughing—through little villages where the few inhabitants clustered to stare, the little children timidly holding to the dresses of the bent old women; past little colour-washed cottages of pink and blue and yellow, with overhanging eaves and dark red lichen-covered tiles; past little wayside hostelries with "Débitant" set up on the rough sign-boards, or tiny churches, with simple whitewashed walls and unpretentious spire, probably serving the country

folk for miles around, at every mile or so meeting a great Crucifix set in a semicircle of guarding trees, or a little shrine by the roadside; then again out into the open plain with stretches of fields as far as the eye could see; until at last the order came to halt for the midday meal. We were turned into a wood, so planted that the path into it was like a Cathedral aisle, the light dimmed by the huge branches, the ground carpeted with moss and last year's leaves, the whole stretching to the dim distance as an altar, where the blue sky shone through. It was a veritable fairyland, only that instead of nymphs and dryads of the wood, there were the laughing, rollicking figures in brown who had already forgotten the grim horrors they had left behind and were skylarking among the trees, after the excellent meal, prepared as we went along in the travelling kitchens and served to us hot as we sat down in the wood! A common reaction of happy madness had seized every one, even the sober second in command set himself to " scrum " with me for a home-made ball, with disastrous results to both in the soft ground, amid howls of derision at the revelation of the very amateur tailor work I had achieved in patching the seat of my riding-breeches! So it went on from day to day—sometimes I rode a Uhlan horse which we had captured from the Germans, and sometimes I marched alongside the men; we spent the night in different villages with very varying degrees of comfort and convenience. Once I was billeted in a French chateau of the Louis

Quatorze period in an old-world grandeur which contrasted strangely with the simplicity of the last six months. I was in one wing of the great three-sided building, in a spacious room with panelled walls and a great oak bedstead in the middle, canopied from the roof. The place in pre-Revolution days had been the country seat of one of the old French nobility. From the two deep little windows I looked out on the neglected grass-grown approach, with moss-grown sun-dial on the lawn, before the great gates. It was all wonderfully picturesque and so suggestive of the past, that I don't think I would have been in the least surprised if a powdered demoiselle in old brocade, à la Pompadour, had emerged at any time from one of the many mysterious cupboards in the panelled walls to regale me with tales of the departed glories of Versailles.

But the march was not by any means always attractive. Apart altogether from the inevitable weariness, there were the aching, sometimes blistered, feet, for we were all soft from our long stretch of trench life. I know that at times I felt I dared not stop the onward steady plodding or I would never have been able to go on again, and I was marching free of equipment; add the heavy pack and rifle and ammunition, and you can begin to imagine the weariness of the men. The weather, also, was nearly always as bad as it could be—at first pouring rain, which soaked us to the skin despite all coats and burberrys, and once, after two days' snow, we had a blinding

blizzard, which came upon us when we were in an exposed treeless waste of desolate country, and continued after we had plunged for miles through the dimness of a snow-covered, boar-haunted pine forest. It was a terrible hurricane that day! The bitter, piercing wind blew up the fallen snow in blinding clouds that looked like wreaths of smoke and vapour; the frozen ground underneath made the transport all but impossible; it was pitiable to see the poor horses strain and fall. It is difficult to make clear how hard a time it was—one slipped on the covered ice and suddenly blundered into two or three feet of snow-drift. On one hill, in about thirty-six hours, no less than five men in the Division had broken limbs as the result of falls. There were only two comforting thoughts for us that day, the first being that we were not in Russia and the other that we were not in the trenches.

We had our inspiring marches too. On one section of the journey we marched, not in single Battalions, but as a Brigade, taking nearly an hour to pass a given point—five Battalions, Machine Gun Brigade, and all the Transport and necessaries. That, certainly had a thrill of its own, as, with Divisional Band in front blaring out a blatant march, one rode along; before and behind, as far as the eye could see, dense masses of resolute men all animated with a common purpose. It made me feel that one was *man* in his strength, rather than *a* man, or a collection of men. Remembering our destination, I felt as if we were

the Israelites going out of Egypt, and if instead of the Ark of the Covenant containing the Tables of the Law, we had only the "scrap of paper" for our inspiration, we were none the less marching to vindicate the cause of righteousness against the powers of darkness, and all the more because, like our great Leader, we came not to bring peace but a sword!

We have reached now a place about sixteen miles from the portion of the line we "take over." The place we are in is a pleasant collection of peasant houses and hostelries, tiny village shops, and a great twelfth-century Norman Church, set on the side of a fair hill amid ancient pines. The hill is crowned by a fortress teeming with memories of Joan of Arc, of Charles VI of France, of our own Henry V and of the Hundred Years' War. Under its ruined walls is the chateau, now used as a British Casualty Clearing Station, and the British Flag floats from ramparts which still bear the marks of the violence of the Revolution. The whole place, from the ancient gate-house at the entrance to the great Crucifix at the top of the steep winding street, is full of a quaint picturesqueness which makes a curious setting for the khaki-clad figures which fill the crowded ways. How little after all has the world advanced since the old Norman Keep was built in the eleventh century: Beneath its ruins, which have their own sinister suggestion of violence and tumult, is the scarcely less ruined sixteenth-century chateau still in the desolation that the flames of the Revolution wrought, and

beneath it now, the normally quiet little streets echo all day long to the rumbling of the guns and the tramp of regiment after regiment of our men passing up to take over more and yet more of the French line. Not here, evidently, is our abiding city; nor does the kingdom of God come with observation. I'm afraid all the dreams of the Utopia of human progress and universal brotherhood with which the wonderful opening years of this twentieth century have been full are destined to meet with the same old awakening. The final future progress of the race is not to be found along those lines, however splendid they may be. Yet the key to the problem is not so very difficult to find. Side by side, from the chateau ramparts float the Union Jack and the Red Cross of the Hospital. When will the Nation and the Race learn the true significance of the Red Cross? "

Professor Brash believes that Laurie now moved a few miles to the north, and that the villages referred to are Gommecourt and Foncquevillers—" Funky villas " as speedily Anglicised by our troops.

30th April, 1916.

". . . Since my last Letter, we have taken over our new part of the line. It is different in many ways from our last place. The Germans are more active here, both in artillery and machine-gun fire, and already we have had several raids and affairs of

outposts which have cost us so many casualties that our losses here have been far larger in proportion than in our last sector. We have three Battalions in the line always—two in the front trenches and one in support—one other is always out in "rest", and the fifth Battalion is for the time split up into its several Companies, for entrenching work in the second line. A second Chaplain has been sent up to the Brigade, and I am, therefore, now able to devote myself entirely to the men in the support and front trenches. My time is spent between the village of the Support Battalion and another village, a quarter of a mile farther back, where the Brigade Headquarters are situated. The former village has been taken and lost again so frequently by both sides, that it is battered out of all recognition; indeed, so completely is it levelled with the ground, that there is only one house left standing, and even that one has several shell holes in it. The second village is in process of being reduced to the same condition, as it is shelled continuously by the enemy. In the one case, I have only a cellar for a shelter, as the whole area is swept continually by machine-gun and rifle fire; nor, alas! even at the other village in Brigade Headquarteds am I able to live and sleep in the open as formerly. The trenches are not so good as in our last sector—they are too wide, with few traverses, and too easily and frequently under machine-gun fire. There are comparatively few dug-outs, and the men in the front line have to sleep for the most part on the fire-

step. This matters less when the weather is warm, as now, but the fire-step makes a hard and cold bed on the wet and bitter nights which have been more or less constant until about a week ago. As I have often said before, however, the discomfort has no appreciable effect upon the constant good humour of the men. Everything is turned from tragedy into musical comedy—song is perpetual, joke and repartee unfailing. Living so much nearer to them, I am able to get at them all more easily than before, and I find that the frequent gathering together of the few in cellar or dug-out gives one much more influence than can be had through the larger and more official Services.

On Easter Day I was able to get round every Company of the three Battalions which were "in," and also of the fourth which was "out," for their Easter Communion, and in dug-out after dug-out had crowded congregations—from 3-30 a.m. onwards until afternoon. A week of heavy rain beforehand made the trenches quite as bad as at Christmas time, but had no deterring effect upon the numbers attending, which were larger than ever before. I thought of you all of course, and I am sure you would not forget me. Throughout Holy Week you were much in my mind, and especially on Good Friday, which was spent mainly in the trenches—the Three Hours being in marked contrast to the familiar peace of Old S. Paul's, as the Germans chose to make their heaviest shelling that day between 12 and 3. Yet even so, it was not the less inspiring a time.

The idea that has been most forcibly borne in upon me since we came to this new place, is the wonderful facility and effectiveness of the army system of co-operation. The work of the Brigade has been mainly that of construction, as the position had to be consolidated and strengthened. If only that constructive power could be directed to another end, what might it not accomplish? To make this clear, let me give you an instance of what I mean. There were two salient points of line, which have been points of special danger in this line for many months. It was allotted to our Brigade to strengthen the position. This necesssitated throwing out a new line of wire, and digging a new front trench, some 225 yards long, in a single night. The manner of its accomplishment gave me an insight into the wonderful organisation of the various units to the one end—engineers, entrenching and wiring parties, with covering parties on either side to hold the enemy patrols. I went out with them and found it a thrilling experience. So near the German front line, that every time a flare went up simultaneously the whole body had to prostrate themselves to avoid detection. I stumbled along trying to move noiselessly in the pitch darkness, wondering how any one saw to work at all. I skirted, or fell into, the shell holes, and nearly betrayed the party with hasty exclamations, or shuffled along, putting out feeling hands upon men's faces and heads, but at last, long before daylight I was able to walk along the whole length of the new trench from

salient to salient. It was a triumph of daring enterprise and disciplined co-operation; but, as I walked back down the communication trench again, I could not but long to see all this combination of courage and energy and directive capacity turned to some more finally constructive end. At the intersection of the communication trench with the support Company's trench there still stands a great Crucifix amid the total ruins of the village it once dominated, and I saw as I passed in the growing dawn that the swallows were building under the Crucified Feet regardless of shells and rifle bullets. "Perhaps," I thought, "we too are building Jerusalem by the very energy of destruction." Please God, it will be so; though, no doubt, it always will be built with sword in one hand and tool in the other, and there will always be survivals of bitter hostility such as that which greeted our constructive effort the next day from the German guns.

It is this sense of the *waste* of the whole war which is perhaps its most exasperating feature. Even the horror gives place to astonished wonder at the care with which priceless resources are thrown to the four winds. It is a long time ago now, but I shall never forget as long as I live the sense of surprise with which I came suddenly upon my first experience of the effects of war in its own immediate surroundings. It was during an advance we made to relieve another Brigade, under heavy shell fire. I had already very intimate knowledge of the effects of shell and rifle

fire, through my work at the Advanced Dressing Station of the Field Ambulance, but in that work the men were brought from the field by stretcher-bearers, and though sometimes hundreds would go through in a single day, with every variety of ghastly wound, there was always an underlying sense of order and system—a kind of Hospital attitude to them; but to come suddenly upon the dead and wounded men lying in the dirt like so many dead rats! I remember most vividly the blank horror with which one stopped short and gazed stupidly at the pools of blood, like so many miry puddles on the road. I can see still the trampled ground, with great shell holes, where the dead men lay battered in dirt and blood, with that far-off look in their fixed eyes. I remember how I stood still with the first shock of it, to my own imminent danger, questioning if it could be true, and then, as the reality and the mad waste of it were borne in upon me, giving way to unreasoning anger. All the high hopes of those lives,—the light of the far-away homes—smeared into bloody dirt without a moment's warning! It is this sort of experience, and this alone, which can bring home with overwhelming force the fundamental barbarism of war—the universal cataclysm—the utter failure of all morals—the imperious need for a new view. And that, after all, was only one of those common every-day incidents of the advanced lines—never recorded —having no " military significance "—never remembered even, save here and there by some sad heart for

whom it has blackened the whole horizon of life. This is going on all the time—along all the line—on all the fronts—quite apart from "attacks" or "raids" or " advances." One grows accustomed to it more or less, and helps to lay the poor boys in their graves day after day, until the sight of a dead soldier in his muddy boots and stained uniform is so familiar as to rouse only a mild interest, unless in some way it is brought specially home, as when the other day eight of the men I knew intimately were knocked out with one shell — four killed instantaneously and four wounded. It is a mercy, indeed, that for the most part one deals impersonally with them, otherwise one would not keep one's reason or be of any use. They are, as you realise (with extreme pathos, too, sometimes!) when you see them in the mass, not men with hopeful lives, with happy homes and loving wives or sweethearts, but " soldiers "—" cannon fodder ", as Napoleon called them, and as the Kaiser apparently considers them. It is true that they are the instruments of final reform, yet it is never less than strange and horrible that the reformation should be wrought by means of this deadly steel and iron, by guns and shells and bullets. I could not help thinking the other day, as I was going through the Trench Mortar Battery arranging the burial of four of their number who had been killed with one trench mortar shell—similar to those they themselves launched at the enemy—as I threaded my way with intense care among the grim collection, looking like so many

huge steel footballs—filled, as I knew, with the most delicately poised and highly unstable explosives—how much we really all were under the dominion of those engines of destruction. The ancient chivalry, the generosity, the pity, which were possible under the old conditions of hand-to-hand warfare, are utterly impossible now to either side under this monstrous domination of those death-dealing machines. It is idle to split hairs over the difference between one atrocity and another. It is all barbarous—all atrocious; it is not a war of men with hearts and brains, but a war of scientific explosives in a region where heart and brain are meaningless. That is why we must see to it that it is done with now, once and forever. Never again must this barbarism be possible, and if only by its own terrifying force can it be ended, then, in God's name—yes, even in God's name—let us add force to force until it is finally destroyed. There is no such thing as kid-glove warfare. Once allow a man the right to smash another man, without a moment's preparation, into formless pulp in the name of war and you shut the door upon all so-called rules. So, swift and deadly, at whatever cost, let us make an end of it for ever.

This brings me, naturally, to what I think can alone justify the war, and what ought to be the Church's attitude as it proceeds, and in view of its (pray God) speedy end.

I was talking some nights ago to a group of the men in "rest": they were mainly my lately Con-

firmed men, who are full of high resolve "to build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land" when they return. We were huddled together in a squalid little out-house, grouped round a solitary candle, which lighted up their earnest faces and threw monstrous shadows of their sombre khaki figures on the background. I, sitting in the midst, had been talking of the splendid destiny of men, and we had all grown more intense as we went over the great possibilities of the future, and then, when we had fallen to silence for a little, one of the men, a Sergeant, spoke up. As nearly as I can remember this is what he said: "For the last quarter of an hour, while you've been speaking, I've been wondering. We've all been facing death for so long, that when we go back home with all those ideas you are talking of in our heads we will expect something new, and I'm so afraid that we will find things at home just the same. I know that I'll say to myself, when I find myself forgetting, 'I'll just go to Church'. Perhaps it will be a Wednesday night, and I know there will be a Service; but then I know I'll find just the old hymns and prayers, and the old clergyman will be just the same as he used to be, and then I'll wish myself back again in the old dark rooms in France, and what will I do?" This, spoken very simply and earnestly, is nearly word for word what he said. And what could I say? Only that I hoped he would find it all so different, so responsive, so inspiring, as to uphold and develop all his good

resolves. But will it be so? Alas! some of them, even of that little group, we shall never have the chance to help. The sequel to that scene took place about four nights afterwards, when we gathered together again, in the light of the moon and of the German flares, amidst unusual enemy activity, with the heavy crump of bursting trench mortar shells and the boom of the big guns, an excited and anxious Officer-in-Charge, paying more attention to the rapid rifle fire and the sound of hand grenades than to anything else; with rifle bullets beating on the wall of the ruined Church behind us and singing overhead as we stood, the same little group of comrades, presenting arms in silence after the committal to the earth of two members of my little company, themselves close friends, separated only by a few hours by their deaths, standing side by side in the same trench, and now laid side by side under those tranquil stars, with their beckoning appeal to the inaccessible greatness that lies beyond us. . . . They are in better hands than ours; but what of the others who return to us? How are they to be met? Upon the answer we give to that question lies, I am persuaded, the future of the Church.

And that opens up a further question. What will be the forces which will be opposed to any change?

I am moved, my dear Children, to try to give you a programme: very rough and ill-considered, but with absolute conviction behind it What will we have to reckon with in the endeavour towards readjustment?

First, of course, the innate selfishness of human nature, the natural acquisitiveness, the force of tradition and convention, the little jealousies, fears, and self-indulgencies of the human spirit, our own and others. Certainly, no outward observances will work any lasting change, no agreement in a uniformity of statement, no harmony of stately worship—not even co-operation in unselfish work. It must be a fresh orientation of the human soul, not so much towards man as towards God, and towards man as a consequence. It must begin with the crushing of our petty fears—our fear of change, fear of the unwonted, fear of suffering and pain, of misunderstanding, antagonism, attack. It must then go on to the conquest of self-indulgence, to a comparatively austere life, to the surrender of illegitimate satisfactions, to what has been finely called a "continence by preoccupation". Then it must go further to the subduing of jealousy, of individual resentments and suspicions and exclusiveness. These things will not be so much conquered in sequence or separately as simultaneously, and the body of those who strive for their attainment must be so far united that they react one upon another. There must be a great effort after individual prayer. The Church must be a perpetual incitement to individual prayer. All the external means that can accentuate and inspire the power of communion with the Spirit of God, the recognition of His perpetual Presence, must be the outward environment. There must be constant

teaching, and inspiring teaching—an apprehension of the significance of the Eucharist as the centre of life and aspiration, the explanation and the communion of life. There must be an absence of formalism, save in the Eucharist. There must be less imperfect and ill-advised social work, save as it comes individually to the members of the community as a clamant duty. The duty of the Body of Christ is to be the organ of the Holy Spirit, the means of His apprehension and His liberation; but it's no use pretending by altruistic activities that we are what we are not. In the general flux of ideals and institutions there will be, I believe, an attitude of the Christian Church such as governed the Primitive Christians, and there will, from time to time, emerge open demands of public action, public duty, *but the Church's first business is the discovery and explanation of Consecration,* and the application of that Consecration to the existing fabric of human society as the demands appear. There is no one royal road to the betterment of the human race. But let it be recognised that the way to power and unity and understanding is by the Body of Christ; and if one comes down to the application of this view to individuals and individual ideas, it is the reassertion of the ideals of baptism—the renunciation of evil, of vanity, of indulgence; the life of the Creed, the standard of Christian morality. The most apparent change will be in the attitude to the Eucharist, and the consequent influence of such an open channel

between us and God. This is not an effort after a Tolstoyan return to a literal adjustment with New Testament precepts. It's an effort to get again into the Communion of the Holy Ghost. It will cost much. We must learn to seek the spiritual ends of material power and advantages; we must be, above all things, sincere; we must realise the value of sacramental channels and make use of them; we must get back to the Consecration of the Early Church. Fear is going; out here it has largely gone. Indulgence is going; out here it, also, has largely gone. The petty antagonisms and jealousies of the human spirit can surely be overcome. If we see the Body of Christ as the true home of the human soul, it will be. Only, we shall have to some extent to come out of the world as we know it; come out of the ruck of average human life and make trial and witness of the Spirit of Christ. This may not seem very clear to you, but it is very clear to me, and, please God, when I return I shall be able to make both the idea and the method of attaining it more clear to you."

IV

The reflections of the last letter were prompted, in all likelihood, by the thought that his year's service was about over. But in June he writes discreetly that " there have been important developments which make it appear desirable that I should remain with

the troops for some weeks longer . . . . but I hope, if all goes well, to be back in Old S. Paul's again on Sunday, 16th July."

The " important developments " were, of course, the Battle of the Somme on July 1st, 1916, and consistent with such guarded meiosis is the fact that Laurie wrote no account of that battle, perhaps because of the part he himself played and which earned for him the Military Cross. Mention in despatches came first, but he shrank sensitively from having his own conduct recognised more than anyone else's. Lt.-Colonel Earle, D.S.O., an officer of the Hampshires who was posted to command the East Lancashires in June 1917, writes of a later period when he and Laurie shared a dug-out in the line.

" Padre," said the Colonel, " you are improperly dressed."

" I am awfully sorry, Colonel, but in what way? "

" You are not wearing the bar to your M.C."

Laurie's reply was typical : " Oh, *please,* old chap, don't; it hurts."

During the first week of May the Division came out of the line and marched back to the Bernaville-Beauval area south-west of Doullens. The journey was arduous, May at its hottest, the men weighted down with equipment. Shrapnel helmets became unbearable in the scorching sun, feet blistered in the heavy boots during the sixteen to eighteen miles tramp on road metal. Partly for comfort's sake and partly for secrecy, they sometimes marched by night

and slept by day in the rat-ridden barns and outhouses of village farm buildings. Marching on to what? Laurie asked himself as they took to the road again on June 20th. But instinct or rumour must have told him that his beloved men were about to be tested in a yet fiercer fire, and he chose to be with them rather than in safety in Scotland.

The 4th Division returned to the Acheux area and went into the line for the assault in the Beaumont Hamel-Serre sector. The action was devastating in its fierceness. Whole battalions were all but wiped out. Laurie went over the top with the Hampshires, whose commanding officer, the Hon. L. C. Palk, D.S.O., died in his arms not long after. He felt that No Man's Land and not a Casualty Clearing Station was his place on such a day.

" Chaplains, like everyone else, had their instruction and appointed place in the plan that was drawn up for the opening day of the Battle of the Somme. But orders and instructions meant little to Canon Laurie. He went where his unfailing instinct seemed to tell him that he was most wanted, and it was in No Man's Land, tending to the wounded and dying, that he spent the 1st July, 1916. For his gallantry on that occasion he was awarded the Military Cross."

The official statement in the London Gazette in as brief as the extract just quoted from the Lancashire Regimental Journal. It states that Captain Laurie " worked all day in helping the wounded back from the front line trenches under heavy fire. When his

Brigade was withdrawn he remained and continued collecting wounded for two days and two nights under heavy fire, showing an utter disregard of personal danger."

A fortnight later he was sitting on the platform of the Church Hall at Old S. Paul's, quietly unassuming, warding off with gentle banter the tributes paid to him by Lord Mackenzie. The occasion was his semi-jubilee in the Priesthood, and it was marked by the presentation of a commemorative album and a cheque.

Hard though it was to adjust himself—and Laurie was the first to admit it—he bound himself to the Canongate for the next eleven months, broken only by a visit to London in October to be decorated by the King in Buckingham Palace. Then the call became too insistent, and in spite of illness and other difficulties and indecision he was off again by May 1917 for yet a third period of service.

V

The 4th Division was withdrawn after the Somme Battle and went into rest again near Beauval. During the eleven months that Laurie was at home, like every other Division, they were in and out of the line. In, at Poperinghe and the Ypres salient from July 27th; out, from September 10th to the Watou area. October found them near Abbeville, and

December again on the Somme. March, April and May were spent mainly in back areas, but in June, when Laurie rejoined them, they were in the Aubigny Arras sector, and it is from here that the two following letters were written.

c/o 1st Hants Regiment,
11th Infantry Brigade,
British Expeditionary Force.

4th June, 1917.

". . . At long (very long) last I have reached my own Brigade, which, having distinguished itself recently in taking a very difficult position, is now out of the line for a well-merited rest. I got an overwhelming welcome, much to my astonishment. I had anticipated that I would be received as an old friend, but I was not prepared for the obvious warmth and sincerity of my welcome. I have had to sit, more or less awkwardly, through many kind ovations in the past, but never one so hearty as this. I met them first at a combined gathering in a great wooden hut, built by some of our predecessors, which rang with lusty voices in " He's a jolly good fellow ", sung as I had never heard it sung before. It was extraordinarily nice and kind of them; and not content with this, long after I had left them, I was awakened out of my first sleep in the early hours of the morning by the strains of " Onward, Christian Soldiers ", sung under the window of my billet by a

group of returning revellers, as a lover might serenade his mistress. It was not exactly a soothing lullaby, and not wanting in an element of burlesque, but it got home. Everyone, from the General of Division and my own Brigadier down to the rank and file, has been most kind. If I don't manage to get something done with them all it will be my own fault.

It's a pretty little country village where we are billeted just now—the village church on an eminence in the centre, with colour-washed, red-tiled houses grouped around it. The country is thickly wooded, and the whole countryside is alive with wonderful fresh green, the trees invading even the little village itself, so that as I sit now outside the church, writing on a two-hundred-year-old flat tombstone, I seem to be framed in green and gold and blue, for the sun is glorious, and the sky of that deep blue, which makes it seem the veil of unknown splendours.

My own billet is a room in an old pre-Revolution mansion, with quaint dormer windows, immensely thick and panelled walls, and old oak roofs. How it escaped the fires of the Revolution I don't know, but I fear its glories have departed, and certainly the ancient noblesse have given place to such swarms of rats as only war-time France could produce! However, rat-ridden, dusty, ruinous as it is, it is still part of *La Patrie,* and when the very muddy pools and manure-heaps are looked upon as *La France,* they call out no less a devotion from the women than the ruins

of the front line call from the men—the women and older children who, from four o'clock in the morning, work with the cows and horses, or till and plough the land, until at sunset they turn into the little church to say their evening prayers."

20th July, 1917.

". . . I am writing this letter in a shell hole, in what but a little while ago was " No-Man's Land," wrested by our men from the Germans, and, though already I see Nature trying to soften the brutal outlines of man's achievements by creeping over the edge with the delicious beauty of white campanula and blazing poppy, there is little room in my mind even for such sweet diversions. I am taking this " off " morning and lying here in the sun, weary and sick both in body and mind after being up all night in the end post nearest to the point of an attack made by our Battalion last night. It will be long before other distractions wear out this last memory of the dimly-lighted dug-out, its narrow length crowded with busy figures of doctors and dressers and bearers, and on the ghastly, bandage-strewn, muddy floor on which I kneel beside the stretchers, trying to give the last messages of comfort and hope to those whose wounds are so awful, that rage and pity are so mingled in one's mind that one is often on the very verge of tears. "Am I going to die, sir, am I going to die?" is the endless question, which has to be answered

in all ways and with such shame, that at last one is driven to the mouth of the dug-out for a breath of air, only to hear the swish of the shells overhead like the ceaseless beating of the waves, and the relentless echoes of the fierce crashes with which I know fresh wounds and death are being dealt out to those who but a few hours before were laughing and joking with me in happy comradeship. As I look out from my shell hole I can just discern the leafless, branchless stumps of the shattered trees. I can see the mass of debris and litter which is all that remains of the village that once nestled amongst them. Near to me are the desolate remains of a derelict Tank, and it is impossible, alas! to get away from the sickly, pungent, unmistakable grip in the air with its hateful story of the unburied dead. Thoughtless evasion, or mere blind journalese optimism, would be an unforgivable crime in such surroundings. Yet, hideous as the story is, it has its own light upon our lives, and it is this light I want to pass on to you. A night or two ago I lost my way. It was almost pitch dark, and I had no lamp with me. The Germans were shelling the village * I had to pass through to get the only landmark I knew. They were using incendiary shells, and it was by the light of their flashes that I at last found my way home. It is by such terrific flashes of truth that there are revealed to us the signposts to the only way out of the blackness of this world tragedy."

*Fampoux.

VI

Once again Laurie's letters fail when we come to a more intense moment, and once again we cannot but feel that it was his humility which held him back, since it was at the battle of Poelcapelle in the Passchendaele offensive of October 4th and 5th that his conspicuous gallantry earned him a bar to his Military Cross. "For bravery and forgetfulness of self," says a note in the magazine, "carrying on his work although himself wounded and needing attention."

His beloved Hampshires were in the front line and the East Lancashires in support, and Colonel Earle, now commanding the latter, tells how Laurie had pleaded in vain with Lt. Col. Armitage, D.S.O., to be allowed to accompany the Lancashire Battalion. "His request was met with a blank refusal. He then came to me. I told him he could come and live with me and thereby could go and see the Hampshires in their assembly position and return to my H.Q., say, half an hour before zero hour. He thanked me profusely and carried out my suggestion with the exception that he did not come near my H.Q. but chose instead to go over the top with the Hampshires."

Professor Brash, who had been continuously with the 4th, except for a brief spell in the winter of

1915-16 with the Ulster Division, sends an account of this action:—

"The Division took part in the Poelcapelle battle of the Passchendaele offensive on the 4th and 5th October. We went into the line in front of Langemarck on the evening of the 3rd October and Padre Laurie went with us. There had been some talk of padres being kept behind when battles were on, but he of course did not pay any attention to that. He felt that his place was with the men and I know that he spent the night in the assembly lines from which the attack was to start in the early morning. From what Company officers told me afterwards he was not, as others might have been, 'in the way,' but on the contrary a great help to the men. He was himself apparently fearless and many a troubled soul must have taken courage from his example on that and many other occasions. All that he did during the next day while the battle raged can only be surmised, but my stretcher bearers gave me news of him from time to time. He was helping the wounded and comforting the dying and directing the stretcher bearers, as they returned, to those that needed most immediate attention. And so he went on for nearly twenty-four hours continuously after a night in the line waiting for zero hour and that under conditions that are really indescribable, though in many accounts of the Passchendaele battles there have been attempts made to describe them. Mud and shell holes everywhere and constant heavy shelling over the whole

area. Of my thirty-two regimental stretcher bearers fifteen were casualties—six killed and nine wounded. Of fifteen Company Officers who went into the action only five survived it; three were killed, two wounded and missing, believed killed, and five wounded.

"How Padre Laurie survived I do not know. I had my regimental aid post in a German concrete 'pillbox,' called 'Puff House,' between Langemarck and Poelcapelle, a little behind the original assembly line, and in the early morning of the 5th (nearly 24 hours after zero) he staggered in, as he said, 'just to see how we were getting on.' He was nearly exhausted and said he had a sore back. There were holes in his tunic and I found that he had a shallow wound right across his back, the skin just cut in places and bruised between—evidently caused by a bullet, probably from a machine-gun. After this was dressed he wanted to go out again immediately, but by threatening to make him a real casualty and send him down wounded (a thing to which he objected strenuously) we persuaded him to lie down and get some rest. He recovered pretty quickly and was out again later in the morning and carried on that day and the next, spending the night at Battalion Headquarters at 'Bird House,' near Alouette Farm. We were relieved on the evening of the 6th, and I suppose that I must have reported him as wounded but remaining on duty. I think that was the occasion on which he was given the bar to his M.C., but I remember telling the C.O. about his doings; and

though Padre Laurie himself did not care anything for those things it is certain that he 'earned' it and more on that occasion.

"After that we moved south and towards the end of October went into the Monchy Defences in front of Arras. There we shared ordinary trench life, living in the same dug-out and sleeping in contiguous wire beds off and on for a month or so. I think it was the happiest time I ever spent in the line. He had the knack of keeping everyone cheerful and there was no doubt of the welcome that he got wherever he went, visiting the companies in the front trenches. It was a relatively quiet time and I at any rate had not much to do. I remember with deep gratitude the long talks that we used to have on all manner of subjects. He had a whimsical streak too, and used to sing quietly in a comical way snatches of songs that were current among the rank and file. This may be difficult to believe, but I have the liveliest recollection of him shaving in the morning and singing at the same time in the most ludicrous manner, 'I'm fu' the noo'!

"I have a treasured souvenir of that time in the trenches at Monchy. They were dug in the chalk and the men used to amuse themselves carving lumps from the walls of the dug-outs. We had an argument whether a chain with separated links could be made from the chalk. I undertook to prove that it could be done and he chaffed me all the time I was at it. I managed two links and presented them to him

after carving the following tags on them, half on each link:—

A	Ω
SIC ITUR	AD ASTRA
ARS LONGA	VITA BREVIS

"Nothing gave me greater pleasure when I came back to Edinburgh in 1931 than the renewal of war-time acquaintance with Padre Laurie (I had called on him once in the interval) and I found that he still had the Monchy souvenir. He apologised humbly for one of the links being broken—it had happened when he brought it home in his kit. But he took advantage of the accident to present me with one of the halves, the intact one, which I now treasure as the best of a few war souvenirs. In addition to the second half of the tags, it is inscribed by Canon Laurie himself: '1st E. Lancs., Monchy Defences, 6th Nov., 1917.'"

Colonel Earle, who had also been vastly diverted by Laurie's crooning (as he called it) of "I'm fu' the noo," adds another incident which is typical. "'Incongruous' was rather a favourite word of Padre Laurie, and I took him to task one day, saying that nine out of ten men would not know what it meant. He disagreed. I told him to go round the line and ask the first ten men he met what was the meaning of the word. He did so. Not one out of the ten knew the meaning."

Moving south to Arras again, Laurie's next letter is dated 8th November, and continues his vivid picture of life in the line. Against his will he had been promoted Senior Chaplain and was now at Headquarters, 30th Division.

". . . When I got back to the Regiment, after my home leave, I found that the men had just gone into the trenches to " hold the line ", and that we were to be " in " for sixteen days. It's not very easy in trench life to get the chance of writing at any length and with any concentration of thought. There is no privacy, no quietness, and the very barest minimum even of the possibilities of writing. In the open you are always in the trench—six feet of muddy wall almost touching you on either side, varying only between stretches of fire trench, with fire step and parapet, lined with sentries in every degree of dirt, wet, and weariness; or communication trench, along which there throng, more or less constantly, working parties, ration parties, company runners and anxious-looking staff officers. The monotony, certainly, is varied from time to time by shell-fire from the enemy, when the portion of the trench you are in is liable to be blown in at any moment; or occasionally by enemy raids, when it is bombed as well. If, in desperate desire for a wider horizon and freer movement you go on the " top," you are sniped with machine-guns; if you stand still in the trench, you hold up the traffic. You may go to a deep dug-out the men occupy,

where you are always sure of a hearty welcome, a long, narrow dug-out, forming really the chimney of the brazier at the far end, filled with smoke, in semi-darkness, and with the groups of figures clustered round the fire keeping up a constant chorus. All this is obviously not conducive to letter-writing. It is little, if anything, better in the officers' dug-out, where I live when in the line. Imagine a narrow tunnel cut in the earth some forty feet down, approached by an inclined passage cut into steps, down which you crawl sidewise, pushing your way past the hanging gas blankets. When you reach the bottom it may be—indeed, it usually is—certainly picturesque. Two or three guttering candles break the pitch darkness; wire netting bunks are on either side, where, with overcoat as bedclothes, you lie down at night, of course without undressing, ready for any sudden emergency. The earthy atmosphere is damp and cold, and has a mysterious quality, which, for all who are not in robust health, means the ever prevalent trench fever. At every unguarded step you bang your head against the logs supporting the low roof, and in this contracted space, jostling one another with every movement, are eight or nine human beings, who, living like rats in their holes, come at dark to get their food and keep a keen eye on the enemy. To such an anti-climax has our twentieth-century civilisation brought us! If you remain below, you sit down in the feeble light at the table—which is dining-table, dressing-table, card-table, and adju-

tant's office—in relays, and sometimes all at once! Throw in the minor details—such as rats and mice, the occasional gas alarms, when you have to seize and put on your gas mask, or the frequent trembling of your little world by the shock of bursting trench mortar shells on the surface—and you can see that the accumulation gives me some excuse for doing the minimum of writing. However, we are "out" now for another sixteen days, and I have an opportunity which I must take advantage of at once.

. . . . Some days ago a heavy mist came down on our part of the line, and enabled me to defy the snipers and go up "on the top" into the village* through which our trenches run. It is an important place, at one time most bitterly contested, and at last taken by us some months ago, after a most daring but heavily costly cavalry charge. Some 800 horses still lie in and about the place. At the end of the little village green, now a mere mass of debris, there runs a hastily constructed barricade, thrown up by the German's, made of furniture dragged from the houses, old gates and railings, mingled with sandbags —even children's toys were among the rubbish. The Germans had evidently made a machine-gun position behind the barrier, for the little square in front of it was littered with dead horses, where men and horses had been shot down; but as I passed on, I saw on the other side of the barricade, some ten or twelve yards farther on, one single horse, which from its trappings

* Monchy-le-Preux.

was evidently an officer's charger. This lad, leading his men, had evidently leapt the barrier, and had met his death alone in the very thick of the enemy. It was a gallant deed, worthy of the leader of this singing multitude, whose heroic courage is only equalled by their cheery unconsciousness of any particular merit in their steadfastness. However long the strain may last, their spirit, I am convinced, will remain undaunted. So must it be with you until you learn that there is nothing on earth that can compare for satisfaction with the joy and exhilaration of self-sacrifice. In the very last action I was in, one of our Hampshire lads went "over the top" with a song on his lips and a football in his hands, after lying for hours, waiting in the mud, under the constant sting of pelting rain. He "placed" his football on the edge of the shell-hole which made his parapet, and "kicked off" for the charge as he went over with the zest of sport to wounds or death. It sounds like mere bravado, I know, but it really is due to the very exuberance of courage the men so often possess. It is in the main, even after three years of war, still the spirit of the men. The more that is demanded of them, the more their purpose stiffens. There is no beating such men; with them ultimate victory is certain. That is why I ask you at home to take your place alongside those marching heroes and get into step with them. As the blare of the trumpet sounds, move forward with them to the joy of Sacrifice."

VII

One regrets that the retreat of March 1918 does not receive fuller description than in the following pages. In his "Open Letter from the Somme" Laurie had written "I remember, perhaps, a couple of hundred battered and weary men—the remnant of a whole battalion after a disastrous attack—when the aching smart of loss was so bitter and so recent, that I do not think there was an officer or man with dry eyes. I have an unforgettable memory of the writer having frequently to dash aside his own frankly streaming tears that he might find speech. Granted that it was reaction, emotion, even hysteria if you will, it is beyond criticism, for it was shown by those who had just looked, not once or twice only, into the open face of death."

Those sentences might well have been written for the letter which follows. Laurie is manifestly war-weary and depressed. The devastation of war, not its heroism, is what obsesses him after four years; and to us today the hope expressed in the last page is ironic, if you will, but ironic only in the sense that Calvary itself is a tragic irony. Twenty-two years later we echo Laurie's prayer.

30th Division Headquarters.
May, 1918.

". . . The work I have to do now is more exacting than in the past. Then I could always manage to get time for letters, sooner or later, on the occasions when we were out of the line, but this work I have now is never done. I have my own special units, both in the line and out, and I have, in addition, all the official work of the Chaplains' Department in the Division. So that, whereas in the old days with the Battalion I had occasionally time to "gather myself together" when we were "out", I almost live in the saddle, going from place to place, from unit to unit. It is not any easier, really, at the moment for the Division (or, alas! what remains of it) is still in the line, and has been "in" almost without a break since the 21st of March; but I am just letting other things go.

. . . . I sit here, in the doorway of my dug-out, and, as I look around, as far as the eye can see there stretches interminably a flat plain of dull earth, pitted like smallpox on every inch with shell-holes, all more or less full of water and mud. It is indescribably desolate. It is broken here and there with little groups of isolated skeleton tree trunks, a few feet only from the ground, with the shattered ends which tell where they were blasted by the shells. The eye is arrested occasionally by little heaps of bricks and bits of grotesquely twisted ironwork,

which is all that remains of the farms and homesteads of the past. Across this dreary plain no one dare venture, unless upon the narrow wooden tracks which are laid over the shell-riddled ground. There are little winding tracks from point to point for foot-passengers, and broader wooden roads of rough timber upon which at night the ration limbers and ammunition lorries come up. To go up one of those broader tracks towards the front line is to have the iron enter so deeply into your soul that you long to have no imagination left. Strewn in inextricable confusion on either side of the track is every description of wreckage—pieces of limbers, wheels, dismounted guns and ammunition wagons, smashed motor-lorries, dead horses, scattered shells and charges, boxes of bombs, pieces of equipment, and, alas! torn rags of clothing and horrible stains that tell their own ghastly story, until, as you get near to the front line (which you only do in the pallor of moonlight or the ghostliness of stars) your eye is caught by the strange and pitiful postures, here and there, of the still figures of the yet unburied dead. It is an extraordinary commentary upon twentieth-century civilisation! To the left of me, as I sit, is a little bit of broken gable wall, which is all that is left of a village church. To this the remains of the Crucifix still cling, though it, too, has been broken by shell-fire, and almost the whole Figure is gone. The graves all about have been scattered every way, and their contents mingle with the ruined litter. It

is quite impossible to convey the sense of utter desolation. It is only the hazards of the ground that keep one from dull, blank depression. Since I commenced to write this letter, a young dispatch rider on a motor-cycle, passing the corner of the gloomy road which goes off at right angles from me, was caught by a fragment of a shell, and now lies not far off, fearfully mangled but, happily, dead. I shall go out presently to a cemetery which I myself opened in the summer of 1915, digging the first grave with my own hands, now swollen, alas! with such a glut of dead that I could not at first believe it was the little place I left.

And this ruined cemetery covers not only a large part of Belgium but also the north of France. When the present German attack began on the 21st of March, the Division was farther south, and it was almost the same tale there. As we fell back from village to village during that bitter fighting, where whole Battalions were practically wiped out, we had to blow up the roads and bridges, and destroy by fire that part of the country we had spent nearly a year in re-establishing, after the destruction of the German retreat in 1916. Perhaps the most pitiful sight of all the retreat was the constant stream of refugees—the very young and the very old predominating—repeating the tragic happenings of 1914 over again. It would be impossible to tell you the details of that misery. But there are two incidents I shall never forget. Once, when I had sorrowfully to

refuse a little group, wheeling an old paralysed man in a wheelbarrow, their desire to put the old man in our ambulance car, which, alas! was too heavily burdened already to take the extra weight. I shall never forget the despair in the young woman's face or the tears running down the cheeks of the old grandmother, leaning on her stick and holding a frightened child. Or another incident of a brave girl who had two wheelbarrows, one containing an old bed-ridden woman and the other containing the little all they had saved from their home. She trundled one barrow with an effort for fifty yards and then went back for the other, and having brought it, set off for another fifty yards with the first, and in this fashion she was making her pilgrimage to her destination.

I tell you these things for it is all-important that you should grasp how complete the ruin is. Those instances are typical and symbolical. The question is, What are we going to rebuild upon them? Those ruined houses, broken churches, ghastly trees, grim outlines, are all God's protest against the spirit which has destroyed, and the laxity which made such destruction possible. And somehow we must win from the War, not only that we shall not suffer such peaceful folk to be for ever cramped by the fear of a foreign foe, but that we substitute for this the corporate life of a growing community which is learning to spell the meaning of Brotherhood."

VIII

Apart from the agony of heart that was never far away, Laurie suffered a deep personal loss in the death of Charles Meister, formerly his curate at Old S. Paul's, and latterly a chaplain to the Forces. Meister had only been ordained Deacon in 1912 and three years later was in France. His career had been distinguished: he had received "mention in despatches" in 1916, and the award of a Military Cross "for conspicuous bravery in his attention to the wounded under fire during prolonged action" was announced in the Church magazine for February 1918. On April 18 he was killed instantaneously by a shell burst.

"I thought," writes Laurie, "at Passchendale, last October, that the limit of human endurance had been reached, but the hurricane bombardment of this front is even worse . . . .There was a deep dug-out at the Brigade H.Q., but it was not roomy enough for all the Staff, and Meister elected to make his berth in a hut on top, which was of course absolutely useless from the point of view of cover. So it was that when he had finished breakfast and was chatting cheerfully with the others before the fire in the hut on the morning of the 18th, the enemy got direct hits, one after another, with two eight inch shells, each of which makes a crater about ten feet deep and about twenty feet across—and of course, instantly for him,

the end. . . . His has been but a brief ministry, but many of us older Clergy feel that there was much more in his short life than there has been in the lives of many who have been granted far longer opportunities of service."

The "hurricane bombardment" which caused Meister's death also brought to an end Laurie's period of active service. "I had not expected to be back amongst you for several months yet," he wrote from Lauder House early in June, "but the chances of war are beyond accurate reckoning. It so happened that my Division had such heavy losses in the German offensive of March, April and May, that when we finally 'came out' on the 13th May, 'The shadow of a shade,' it was impossible to reconstitute again, and the remnant being dispersed to other Divisions, the Chaplains were also dispersed."

Before leaving France he tried to visit Meister's grave and nearly found his own in doing so:

". . . The last cemetery I visited was that where Charles Meister was laid. It was not easy to reach, and is now, I fear, in German hands. Three attempts I had to make before I reached it. On the first, I found myself in the midst of a battle that was raging round the very spot; on the second, I was forced to turn back, when almost there, by the violence of the shelling; and only on the third did I reach the actual village. It was a grim journey. He is buried at La Clytte, not far from Ypres, in Flanders. The German line was just beyond the village, which had been so

heavily shelled that it had been evacuated by the French, who were holding that part of the line when I went up on May last. For days the tide of battle had surged around the little church which marked the centre of the village, and under the shadow of which I had been told Meister was laid. The road was being constantly shelled, and dead horses and men were strung out at intervals along its length, and in the lower levels the " mustard " gas was still accumulated. It was an exciting journey. I took refuge behind the wall of a farmhouse until the worst of the shelling should be over, but an incendiary shell set the farmhouse ablaze, and the only thing left to do was to go on, and I came at last to the village. There are two cemeteries, one a little distance from the other. The first was filled almost entirely with the little crosses of the French dead, with the rather flamboyant tricolour badge on each. Only a few British dead, some marked with the pathetic title, " Unknown British Soldier "—none the one I was in search of. So along the road again, to the little churchyard beside the church, but just as I got there the bombardment became terrific, centred upon the church as the main target. Shell after shell dropped into the graveyard, until it became evident that to linger meant almost certain death. So again I had to go back, with only the satisfaction of knowing that one of the simple white crosses with a little tin inscription, which I had seen under the shadow of the once dignified cruciform church, with its tower

rising from the choir, must have held so much of the heart of Old S. Paul's."

IX

One last memory must suffice. Laurie had been friendly with a young Oxford don, a company commander, in the days before the battle of the Somme. In the fighting at Beaumont Hamel he had been killed in such circumstances that even his body was never recovered. Laurie writes—and his words make a fitting last chorus to the tragedy of war—"When we got to the same part of the line a few months ago, in the effort to revive those happy and pathetic memories, I searched among the tangled growth of trailing weeds and grass and found at last the entrance to the dug-out. It was as I had last left it. A little light filtered down from the entrance and showed the rough walls, the stones which had been our seats, and, at the end, the heap of straw which had been this lad's bed. I went across to it, and found a book, which had been left behind, beneath the straw where his head had lain. It was open, as if it had been read just before going out to what had proved to be the last Great Adventure, and my eye was caught by Christina Rossetti's lines:—

> My silent heart be still, and break.
> Life, and the world, and my own self are changed
> For a dream's sake.

It is for us to turn into reality the glorious dream which possessed this lad and so many of the others we have known and loved. There can be no doubt that we too must find Life, and the world, and our own selves are changed."

X

There is no doubt that for Laurie himself, life and the world and his own self were changed. As soon as the war was over he flung himself heart and soul into the tasks of reconstruction. In his widely read Letter from the Somme he laid down four principles of personal application:

1. Your own personal consecration to the cause of God in His Church—based upon—
2. Your effort after renewal of life in real repentance, and issuing in—
3. Your endeavour to make more intelligent and more powerful your private prayers and public worship.
4. Above all, your endeavour to understand and rightly to apply the power of the Holy Communion.

It is not, perhaps, too much to claim that these four points really did, and do, mark the congregational life of Old S. Paul's. However imperfectly they may have been realised, they were and are very definite objectives. Along with them were to go the outward

and visible signs of the inward and spiritual graces. Laurie hoped for much from the League of Nations, and in more immediate and local politics he urged the need for Municipal Reform, offering three points for attack:

(a) Better Housing conditions.
(b) Some form of State Control of the Liquor Traffic.
(c) Some attack upon the conditions of Sweated Industries.

For Laurie himself and for many of his flock, careful readjustment to peace time conditions was possible. For the overwhelming majority the transition was too difficult. Twenty years after the event, in the throes of another war, we are sadder and wiser men. To us, the reaction is, in a way, humanly understandable. One cannot, by a gesture, transform the overwrought demonic energy of destruction into sustained and tranquil creative activity. One cannot expect that men who held life so cheap should suddenly consider it infinitely precious, or that those who had been denied so much of happiness and comfort for so many years, should not suffer a cataclysmic reaction in a carefree and irresponsible environment.

The years of cocktails and short skirts, we termed that period. It was a superficial description. They were the years of disillusionment, of the slump, of unemployment, of men with rows of medals selling

matches at street corners. The depression, the dole, and then the General Strike of 1926—" The finest gesture our men and women have made since 1918," said Laurie. " I would not lift a little finger to break the strike."

Laurie was always a realist. Like S. Paul, he had the art of making the magnificent compromise. Just as, when a chaplain, he knew one could not preach pacifism to the troops—and he could be extremely brutal to younger and less experienced padres who tried to—though all the time from the depths of his soul he loathed war and recognised most clearly that it was not God's way; so in peace time he knew that the Catholic Church was his sole Crusade, and he wisely left politics on one side. His job was to train leaders, to give men and women that vision without which peoples and nations must perish, and not to set up as an arbiter of international affairs or a professor of economics.

So to his task: " The stages in the act of Consecration in the Eucharist . . . are, as it were, four great windows through which one looks out on life, corresponding to the manual acts with the sacred elements . . . The Holy Bread is, first ' Taken '—*i.e.,* ' separated from ' merely selfish purposes and ' separated to ' the purposes of God. Second, the ' Breaking '—*i.e.,* the violence that must perforce be done to the personal will if it is to be made one with the will of God. Third, the ' Blessing '—*i.e.,* the union of the separated and broken will with the will

of God, which has all the sweetness of intimate communion, more than compensating for the pain. Fourth, the 'Making'—the creative power for good, for goodwill that accompanies the 'Do This'—*i.e.*, 'Make This' as His Memorial. So that the great motive and direction of a consecrated life—a life devoted to the service of others—are set forth continually in the action of the Drama of the Eucharist."

Such was Laurie's considered and profound reflection upon the years in which he had been in such close contact with self-sacrifice and consecration to a mission. National rededication to God was the only thing which could justify the appalling suffering of those war years.

"We must not fail our lads," the cry rang out in sermon after sermon. "They died for us. We must live for them."

XI

And so in patient pastoral and social work the years went on. Always acknowledged a leader in the Canongate Laurie won wider recognition in the city. Honours came which pleased him without elating him—the Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, a Doctorate of Divinity from the University, a Canonry at St. Mary's Cathedral. When King George V opened the National Memorial in the Castle, Laurie was one of those chosen to represent the Chaplains to the Forces.

They were the years also which saw the erection of the War Memorial, or Warrior's Chapel, to very dignified designs of Mr Tarbolton. No visitor to Old S. Paul's can ever forget the impressive approach —one turns from the crates and hampers of Market Street through the swing doors to find an exquisite XVth century Florentine low relief of the Virgin and Child facing one at the foot of the stairs. Then the thirty-three steps of the Scala Santa—a happy coincidence Laurie always thought—to the amazingly beautiful Calvary at the top. The work is by Mr Alfred Hardiman, and Laurie used to tell how he visited the sculptor's studio in London to examine the designs. After looking at them for a long time he shook his head. "No, Mr Hardiman," he said, "they won't do at all."

"But why?" protested the artist.

"You have made a comely and well proportioned man hanging on a cross, and I agree that it is very beautiful, but it won't do."

"But what else could I have done?" asked Hardiman.

"You must make God reigning from the Altar of Calvary."

And so Laurie spoke of the Christus Victor, and kindled the imagination of Hardiman anew. "It's the first thirteen verses of St. John that we must have," was his final ultimatum. Hardiman read the gospel with fresh understanding and anyone who kneels before that soaring triumphant figure of our

Lord, or who unites himself with the quiet adoration of S. Mary and S. John who stand below. must recognise how perfect is the artist's spiritual penetration.

And then the lofty chapel itself, its full height emphasised by the rich purple backcloth of the altar. Lamps illumine the columns of names, set in bold Roman characters of bronze, along the walls, and light up the soft colours of the regimental banners which hang above.

The buildings were consecrated on the evening of Armistice Day, 11th November, 1926. Bishop Walpole and General Sir William Peyton, Commander-in-Chief in Scotland, took part in the service, and Canon Mitchell-Innes was there too, with all his old curates—Laurie, Principal Perry and Bishop Reid of Glasgow. Drums and trumpets, Parry's " Jerusalem," " John Brown's Body," the Creed as an act of adoration and worship, and the Te Deum as a final shout of praise.

Laurie once said he could wish his own name might have been found among those of the fallen. We thank God that it is not. But he certainly continued Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end, and the lines of Laurence Binyon that he chose for the Warrior's epitaph serve equally for his own :

They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We shall remember them.

I

" The deprivation of sleep, the hardest to bear, the most meritorious, was the one he embraced most willingly. Like St. Francis of Assisi, he wore down the beast, Brother Ass, only making pause when it could bear him no longer." Henri Ghéon wrote these words of Jean-Marie Vianney, the saintly curé of Ars: they might with equal truth have been written of A. E. Laurie.

Those of us who experienced his ministry at the Altar or in the confessional, on the bed of sickness, or in private conversation, knew his power to " cast out devils," and some of us were dimly aware that " much prayer and fasting " must have gone to the perfect appropriation of God's gifts in such keenness and power. " Fasting, silence and the cell," wrote another eminent French author,* " make for light in proud souls. They have always been necessary, they always will be necessary." And Laurie's was a proud soul, perhaps not the " âme orgueilleuse " in the theological sense, but profound, enquiring, richly stored, adventurous, a soul which demanded strict

*Villiers de Lisle Adam in Axel.

and uninterrupted spiritual training to reach its highest peak of ascetic efficiency.

Fortunately for himself, he appears to have been one of those people who could do with a fairly short commons of sleep: but that he wore out his heart, and that, even in the last years of his life, he tightened up this discipline of deprivation, are facts definitely known. Too often we excuse ourselves by saying of others—" It's easy enough for them," without first enquiring what the cost actually was. In any case, down to the time of his death, Laurie began the day by rising at half-past five. " I find I need extra time for prayer," he said to one of his most intimate friends. It is the remark of the parish priest for whom intercession has become as essential as breathing.

Sometimes, too, he needed more time for personal service. Though he knew the Canongate blindfold, on one occasion he entered a house mistakenly. (" House " is a courtesy title in the Canongate; too often it means a single room). He found an old woman ill in bed, a Presbyterian, though evidently long lapsed, for no one from a church came to visit her. But to Laurie she was first and foremost a child of God, and for several months, until she had recovered, he rose half an hour earlier every morning to clean out her grate, lay and light a fire (no doubt with coal and kindling of his own buying), and make her a cup of tea. This done, he went on to the early Eucharist.

As in many other of his public ministrations, his method of celebrating Holy Communion was peculiarly his own. It was a meditative office. There was nothing of the " blessed mutter of the mass," but morning by morning he prayed it with the reverence and wonder of a newly ordained priest. One rarely experienced such an amazing fusion of the personal with the impersonal. As priest, he was " a voice "—a voice, and hands, the self-effacing representative of the Body of Christ. He loathed the intrusion of emotional and personal affectations and inflexions in the reading of prayers. " Don't wheedle the Almighty," he said bluntly to one young curate whose sentimental sing-song had jarred on him. " You are there to bring your people into God's presence, and you can't do that if personal mannerisms stand in the way."

Laurie's practice tallied exactly with his advice. His beautiful voice, almost completely devoid of any local accent, always firm and clear, had, at such moments, a remote and prophetic quality which took the worshipper straight into the presence of God, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. And yet, paradoxically, it was the intensity of Laurie's personal approach to the altar, his reverence and humility, his immediate awareness of the Real Presence, that were such a help in teaching others to worship.

Laurie was probably quite unaware of it, but many souls were awakened to the sense of the divine by

watching him at the altar. Like the silent sermon of St. Francis, his bearing spoke to us of the immediate presence of God

His gestures, too, were reverent and deliberate. When he knelt for the Incarnation, we too, kneeled at the manger at Bethlehem. His genuflections after the Words of Institution and the Invocation were reverent reflexes as inevitable as the narrowing of the pupil before bright light. To see him elevate the Chalice and the Host was truly for oneself to be offered in the Body of Christ.

It was his duty as Rector to instruct his deacons in the method of celebrating. He taught us, of course, the usual priests' preparation—" I will go unto the altar of God," and the xliii psalm; " I will wash my hands in innocency . . . ." at the ablution; and " Lord, I am not worthy . . . ." before our own communions. But he taught us more: " At the Comfortable Words, I always for myself complete the text from the Epistle to Timothy—' This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am chief.' " No affectation of humility—an intimate and privileged glimpse into a saint's approach to God.

Of the Administration he would say—" Watch the people's hands. They're fascinating. The grimed and horny hands of a workman; fingers calloused by driving a pen; hands red from washing dishes in a sink; fine soft white hands, with beautiful rings.

You get to know a person from their hands, and when you know them, then each time you place the Wafer in their palms you can pray for them, and for their special needs." Such fellowship in prayer, such joy in administering the sacrament, were infectious. What Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote of The Bugler's First Communion was true of the early services at Old S. Paul's—

> Here he knelt then in regimental red.
> Forth Christ from cupboard fetched, how fain I of feet
> To take his youngster his treat!
> Low-latched in leaf-light housel His too huge Godhead.

Although he was stern in his demands both on himself and on others, he was usually considerate. At an early service, particularly at the big communions on Sunday, brevity was to be aimed at. He would never allow the indiscriminate use of Post Communions. "They've been on their knees long enough," he would say, particularly truly with regard to the Scottish Liturgy. If he had been acting as deacon he would wait until the Elements had been consumed and then come up to the altar to assist at the ablutions. "Hurry! Hurry!" he would whisper. "Don't waste time!" Some people thought he didn't mind how many fainted at an early service, but he did.

After the building of the Warrior's Chapel, when he was not himself celebrating, he loved to ring the Sanctus bell in the turret. It was difficult to do, and

he insisted on our practising it. But when he rang it, it indeed proclaimed a gospel to the awakening world outside, and invalids in the Settlement close by crossed themselves and made their act of spiritual communion; the early workers in the store which towered above the building heard it, and as the solemn bell beats floated out over the railway lines, where the night express from King's Cross still panted for breath, they carried the witness of the Church, that amid the changes and chances of this fleeting world we can repose on God's eternal changelessness.

After the service was over he remained on his knees in prayer, either before the Blessed Sacrament or on the stairs in front of Hardiman's beautiful Calvary. It was the time of his meditation, and there was an unwritten law that no one ever attempted to speak to him or interrupt his prayers. Even when he rose to go, there was in his bearing something aloof and detached, something infinitely withdrawn from this world. People did not expect him to see them or to speak to them, and he went gravely and alone down the thirty-three steps of the Memorial Stair—each step a year in the life of his Blessed Lord, and would look at the beautiful Florentine relief of the Madonna and Child before switching off the light and going out into the dawn. Sometimes he went home to breakfast. Sometimes—frequently—he would go first to administer a Sick Communion. The day had begun.

II

After breakfast Laurie went back to the church to deal with his correspondence. "Vestry" was a very grand name for the subterranean cubby hole where he worked—the partitioned basement of an old moulding shop out of which the furnace had been removed, where even in high summer artificial light was needed. The windows—could one have seen through them—looked up to a bleak patch of earth littered with tin cans or grimy washing that had blown off clothes lines fifty feet above. Inside, a writing table covered the whole of the end wall. It was piled high with ancient books and papers. In three comparative oases there was room for a typewriter, the day book in which all official engagements of the clergy were entered, and a space on which to write letters. The chairs were uncomfortable, and the drawers of the desk made one sit sideways when writing, for the table had to accommodate two people, and the central aperture was occupied by the copper bowl of an electric fire. A strip of carpet saved one's feet from the icy coldness of the concrete floor. A second table, wooden chairs, cupboards, pegs for overcoats and cassocks, completed the furniture of the office. The control room of a submarine would have been luxurious in comparison, but if otherwise sordid there was at least the mystery of a concealed Headquarters. No sentry

stood by the open door, yet admission was a privilege, and certainly many important decisions were taken there, many treasured letters written, many a bosom cleansed of perilous stuff.

Monday morning began with a staff meeting in this "Bishop's Palace," as Laurie used to call it. Prayer, then confession in regard to stipulated duties —Laurie expected his curates to pay at least twenty visits in addition to sick visits, each week, and to be punctual in taking offices—then a litany, for the people, and for the clergy, that God would enrich them with pastoral gifts of the Spirit. The week's work was planned out, information about sick people exchanged, lots drawn for jobs that no one wanted, and then the curates would wander along Princes Street to spend their morning off drinking coffee and talking shop, while the Rector would call in his secretary and start work on his letters.

And how varied, how intimate, how exacting, was that correspondence, no single person will ever know. A letter asking for spiritual advice, some one wanting help in finding a job, the affectionate letter of friendship, an application for a grant of money or for admission to some home, reports from the many boards and committees on which he served, the usual advertisements and circulars, and, nearly as futile, empty chatterbox letters which, of his courtesy, received, if they did not merit, a reply. To most, he dictated answers, to an amazing number, he wrote by hand.

The work was frequently interrupted—

Rector: "O, Miss Anderson, I asked A. to come at ten o'clock. You might look out and see if he's there."

Secretary: (*returning*) "Yes, he's there. (*Wearily*) "And B. and C. and D., all waiting for you. *And* Miss X. I told her you were terribly busy this morning, but she says she'll wait. And Miss Y. says the same."

And so it went on. Laurie interviewed a never-ending stream of men and women. Money, jobs, advice, tickets for groceries. Usually he stood or sat at the back of the church, sometimes he would take the petitioner to a side chapel and pray. Then again to his letters—invitations, business letters, love letters, anonymous or abusive letters—the correspondence of one who so intimately had touched so many lives.

His courtesy never flagged. There was no one who suffered fools more gladly. His patience seemed inexhaustible, his wit and humour never deserted him. One good lady came to enquire for his health—he had been ill and had just consulted Dr. Macrae Taylor. The double barrelled name was confusing. "Oh, Rector, I hope Dr. Haig Ferguson (a leading gynaecologist) was able to give you a good report."

"Come, come, Miss So-and-So, surely I'm not such an old woman as that!"

At last he would get away down the stairs to the car that was waiting to take him on his rounds. A

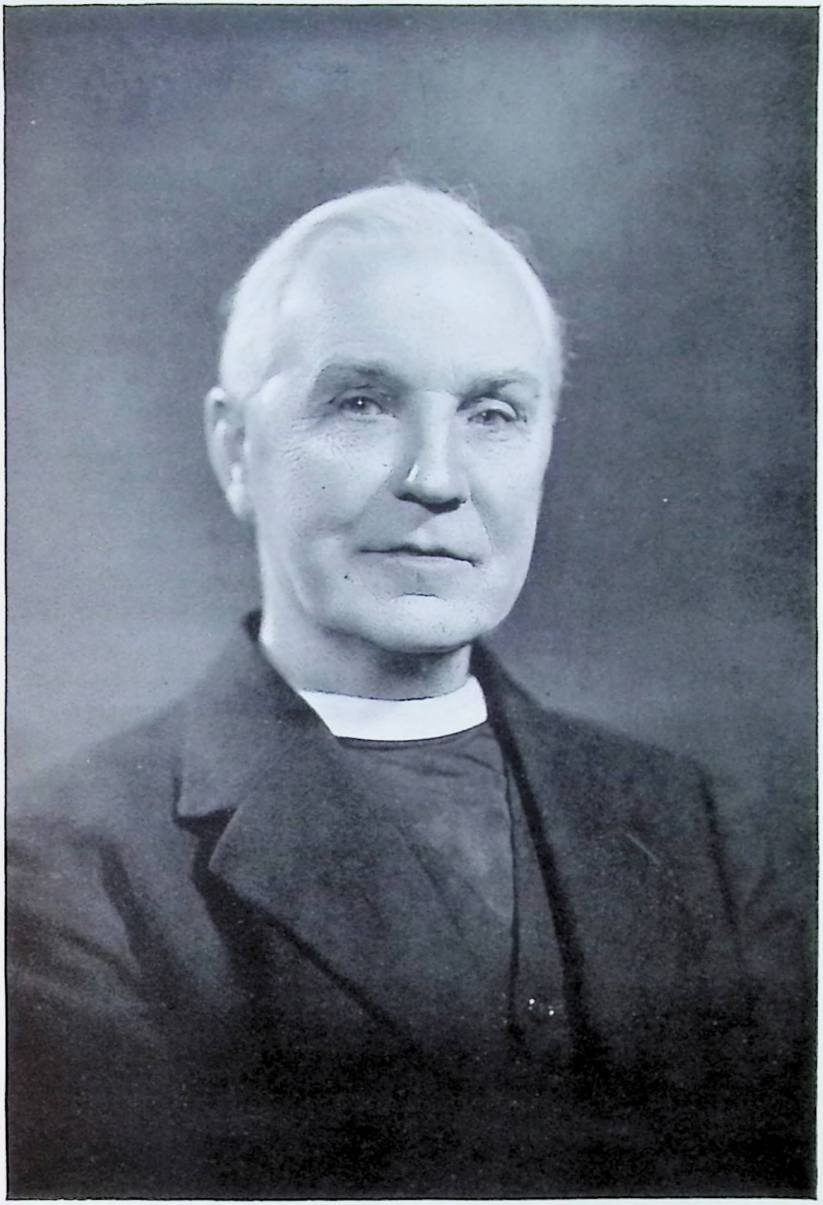
glance in at the Child Garden, some business to discuss with Miss Hardy, an all too brief game with the children, then on to the hospitals and nursing homes. Here the combination of unpunctuality and a partial medical knowledge sometimes brought upon him the professional jealousy of the nurses and sisters. They complained that he kept patients waiting—which was quite true—that he frequently was unwise in discussing and diagnosing symptoms, and that occasionally his ministrations put an undue emotional strain on the sick person. There would be no point in endeavouring to refute such assertions: there undoubtedly were cases where each of these objections was valid. But on balance there is equally no doubt that Laurie was an amazingly gifted sick visitor. To the non-Christian, death, however inevitable, is alarming, and many a nurse, who would willingly have spared a dying man the certainty of his end, must have been disconcerted by one who insisted on speaking the truth in love. To Christians, death is a door into the nearer presence of God, and in cases of grave illness Laurie's sole care was that the man should not cross that threshold unprepared. He took his responsibilities courageously and literally: the Prayer Book Office says—"Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special Confession of his sins," and Laurie knew, far better than any nurse, when a dying man's hope should turn from this world to the next.

Denial of access brought him on one occasion one

of his rare experiences of the supernatural. A woman "that had been a sinner" had come back to Edinburgh to die, and lay in a ward of the Royal Infirmary. Laurie had visited her in the afternoon and had heard her confession. He promised faithfully, in answer to passionate entreaty, that he would return in the evening with the Blessed Sacrament. When he came, the screens were round her bed. It was very late, most of the other patients were asleep, only the dim pilot lights burnt in the ward and on the stairs. As a rule, Laurie had the freedom of the Infirmary, day and night, but the Sister of this ward refused him admittance. In vain he pleaded with her: she would not allow him to go in. Bitterly disappointed he turned to go down the darkened staircase. He paused to look at a glow of light that suddenly appeared out of the gloom in the well of the stairs. To his amazement, it resolved itself into the features of the woman he had come to visit, features distraught with anguish—"As though," he said afterwards, "her agonised spirit had made a last effort to get into touch with mine."

He was too wise and saintly a priest to let this experience trouble him—after all, he had done what he could, the woman's soul was in the hands of God. Nor did it surprise him to learn that death occurred a few minutes later.

Fortunately such incidents were rare, but there were occasionally disconcerting moments, as when one deaf man, wishing to make his confession, and



believing, as so many deaf people do, that everyone else was hard of hearing, bawled a series of lurid and picturesque sins into Laurie's ear while the rest of the ward sat up and listened, spellbound.

From his medical training, he knew that the power of hearing may last longer than the power of speech, and he taught his assistant priests how to test the reflexes of the eye in the case of some one lying half-conscious. So long as that person could be aware, Laurie never ceased his Christlike ministrations—

> " Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes,
> Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies."

And then, as Heaven's morning broke, he would kneel and say that tremendous Commendatio Animae —" Go forth, O Christian soul "—in ringing tones that knew only of victory.

He visited fever (even smallpox) wards unfailingly and without fear, for he had no thought for himself. There is a vivid memory of the bitter New Year's night of 1898-99, when smallpox raged in the Canongate. After a Midnight Service Laurie and his sister picked their way through streets littered with broken bottles, where drunk men and women still lurched with an abandon all the greater because life was more precarious. " Hogmanay " (the Holy Month!) is still observed in Scotland as a Bacchanalian orgy, and at midnight bottles are traditionally

broken against the walls of the Tron Church in the High Street, a few yards from the top of Carrubber's Close. A bitter wind whistled through the valley between Salisbury Crags and the Dumbiedykes, and the Rector and his sister put down their heads and battled against the driving showers. The emergency fever hospital was in the Queen's Park, not far from St. Leonard's. In the fitful light you could see the long low wooden huts, feebly illuminated within. Miss Laurie waited at the gate while her brother went inside to visit. Neither had any fear: Jesus had laid His hand on a leper, and Laurie was also about His Father's business. "Thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the sickness that destroyeth at the noonday. A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee."

And wherever he went, Laurie carried radiance and hope. Carried presents too—a toy for a child in the Sick Children's Hospital, a bunch of flowers to a tenement in Greenside or Arthur Street, fruit and wine to people who could not afford them, and, at times, more impulsive and unusual gifts too—blankets from Lauder House, a bottle of whisky, a scent spray, a basket of strawberries—common enough—though who but Laurie would have completed the offering with sugar and cream?

One could multiply incidents and anecdotes indefi-

nitely; one last remark must suffice. A woman for whom Laurie did much, and who is now a member of another congregation, told how her present rector had visited her in sickness. "He was very kind," she said, "he told me a funny story," and then added wistfully, "Canon Laurie would have given me his blessing."

III

Luncheon, however late he sat down to it, had to be eaten somewhere. He was in great demand as a guest, for he had a remarkable power of dissociating himself from things which worried or saddened, and could abandon himself completely to childish—one might even say impish—fun. One day in a friend's studio, enthusiastically helping to prepare his own omelette, the next at some country house in the nearer Lothians, where he would wander in the gardens until the inexorable enemy dragged him back to a board meeting. Another day he would lunch with one of his curates at the University Union, sharing the table and the talk with young doctors and barristers. Or yet again he would himself be the host, to all charming and solicitous, to the young in particular, spellbinding. The following extract from a letter epitomises what must have been correspondingly true for many a guest.

"At the time when 'As You Like It' was produced in Princes Street Gardens, and I played

Touchstone, the Rector was abroad, but received (as far as I can gather) very glowing accounts of my performance.

On his resuming work, one of the first things he did was to invite me to lunch with him at the New Club, an invitation which I gladly accepted, for I regarded such an outing as an event—quite apart from the fact that there I could always be sure of the most perfect green figs with thick cream!

His first remark, made in an ordinary conversational tone, which gave it added force, was—'Dear boy, I wonder if you realise the imminence of immortality?' As a conversational opening, I have never heard anything surpassing that. Yet, somehow, it was typical of his way of thought, which could receive an impression from a death-bed, and use it throughout the day as an inspiration to people whose thinking powers were tending to become slack.

We discussed many things at lunch, and more as we sat in the huge leather chairs of the reading-room, but not until we were descending the stairs, did he broach the important subject. I can see the rather worried expression in his eyes now; feel the grasp of his hand on my arm as he said, 'Do you think it would be a wise thing to give up the security of one profession for the doubtful prospects of another?' Seeing my look of surprise, he went on, 'I do not doubt that you will succeed on the stage, but it is a hard life for a beginner, you know.'

Then I realised that he was afraid lest I, on the

strength of my 'Touchstone,' would throw Insurance over and seek the bright lights of stardom!"

The quotation is valuable, for it does much more than give us a pleasant glimpse of Laurie as a host and clubman—it shows us that in all his social contacts he never lost sight of his vocation as a priest and a pastor. Cowley offers a curious word of advice to its priest associates—never to appear less religious than they really are. That Laurie was a sophisticated man of the world, with a fund of well-informed conversation, a courteous and appreciative guest, is quite true; but how much more. "I am made all things to all men." Many clergy have taken those words as condoning a life of worldliness, forgetting, in practice if not in theory, St. Paul's all-important qualification: "That I might by all means save some." To Laurie the salvation freely offered in the gospel was the one thing that mattered. A reception, a private view, an evening at the theatre, any opportunity of meeting new people—all might well be enjoyed for their own sakes. But there were few, if any, who ever met him even casually, who did not receive something spiritual from him. Letters from all over the world, from laity and clergy of our own and other denominations, leave little room for doubt. And Laurie, on his part, knew how to win souls by making demands on them—the chance word—not so chance either—of a mystical or metaphysical nature, that led to a request for a private conversation, an anecdote, a repeated saying from S. Saviour's Child

Garden, that first of all won a cheque and later drew the interested person into devoted service; a flash of criticism of a book or a work of art that sent the hearer away with a wholly revised standard of values.

To his curates he preached that essential orientation with passionate earnestness: "Remember that you are first and foremost a Priest of God, and a long way second, the manager of a Boys' Club," and he never tired of emphasising—"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." To Laurie all these things were added; he had a tremendous capacity for enjoying life, he had a tremendous capacity for carrying out social work made possible by his social contacts. But ever and always the physical world was shot through and through, interpenetrated by the spiritual world—"Dear boy, I wonder if you realise the imminence of immortality?"—ever and always the hand of God was heavy upon him—

> Come, for the dancers wheel,
> Join we the pleasant din,
> Comrade, it serves to feel
> The sackcloth next the skin.

IV

Of Laurie's work on the various boards of the Church it is manifestly impossible to speak in detail. He came and went at 13 Drumsheugh Gardens for

many years and in many capacities, and doubtless his wisdom if not his wit is summarised in innumerable minute books.

One principle, and one principle only guided his deliberations—Faith: Faith in its dual aspect of trust in God and belief in man.

Bismarck is reputed to have said that in politics farsightedness is much more dangerous than short-sightedness, and, where the Kingdom of God was concerned, Laurie would have agreed about the spiritual danger. He believed that the maintenance of the church should in general be the responsibility of each generation, and that therefore schemes might be launched in faith, without taking too anxious thought for their subsequent endowment. If people really want anything, he argued, they will pay for it —an optimism justified in his case, for he had unlimited power in kindling people's imagination and enthusiasm.

He was impatient of a ca' canny policy when there was a burning need for action. He believed implicitly in " Ask, and it shall be given unto you," and once of a certain dignitary he said—" He believes you can found the Kingdom of Heaven on an actuarial basis, but it can't be done." Such self-abandonment to the Divine Providence disturbed many of his fellow clergy, and Laurie was often subject to much criticism and opposition. On one of the several occasions when his name was put forward for a bishopric, a remark was made to the effect, " Of course, we all

know Laurie's a saint, but what we want is a business man "—a natural, but God knows how mistaken, a view. A brother priest, who had been one of his most hostile critics and who, like him, had not many years to live, came, not long before his death, to apolgise for the occasions on which he had descended to unworthy personalities, and to affirm his conviction that Laurie's was the truer approach to the things of God.

Hand in hand with his trust in God went his belief in man. "I always back my men," a celebrated newspaper editor is reported to have said, "especially when they're wrong!" Laurie held much the same attitude towards the mistakes of others. "If you act at all," he used to say, "you are bound to make mistakes. But you must act." And those who worked under him valued above all else the unfaltering confidence he placed in them. It took a long course of bungling or stupidity (or worse) before Laurie withdrew that confidence. But when he felt that time had come, he never hesitated in making his decision known. Nor did the memory of failure rankle: executives, institutions, organisations were to him what the dodo or the plesiosaurus were to the Life Force—materials for experiments which might serve for a time, but which could be discarded or outgrown as need arose. If an "activity" died, he shed no sentimental tears; it had served its turn, the new demand would in time find its expression through a new form.

From the whole cast of his mind it is not surprising that the Social Service Committee should have claimed a great deal of his time and thought. So much of his own work was on those very lines: for several years he had a little room off the High Street where people could come and see him privately: girls in trouble, men in difficulties, he would take them there and listen to their stories. The police knew, and helped him, but few others were aware of this branch of his work.

He served also for a period on the Overseas Missions Board, and here his underlying earnestness was qualified by his interpretation of certain passages of scripture. He could be sanguine enough: "We were having a meeting of Sunday School Superintenrants in Drumsheugh Gardens," writes a correspondent, "when he (being our Chairman) and I were both studying a map showing the increasing amount of ground covered by Christianity over a certain number of years. Canon Laurie was very optimistic, but I said I thought it was very little. Then he said, 'But look at the number of years it covers.' Still pessimistic, I replied, 'But look at the space it still has to cover,' and to my amazement he burst out laughing."

On the other hand, he distrusted the sentiments of that hymn with the lines—

> "Till the earth shall be filled with the glory
> of God,
> As the waters cover the sea."

"Jewish millenarianism," he said, "where the wish is father to the thought," and he placed much more emphasis on the idea that the opportunity of redemption should be offered to all, though all would not necessarily accept it. He used to quote (admittedly with a twinkle) the parable of the sower to the effect that even Our Lord regarded 33⅓% as a reasonable result in evangelical work.

In 1917 he was made a Canon of St. Mary's Cathedral, and in 1925 its Chancellor, but while he appreciated the honour, his heart lay in the work of his own church almost to the point of excluding interest in other congregations. It was not that he refused to help, but he never liked being away from Old S. Paul's except to conduct a Retreat, or on some business of an equal spiritual urgency.

It goes without saying that his work on those various boards was helpful, but, unlike certain clergy who measure their own importance by the number of committes on which they sit—and talk—Laurie's heart was in his parish. He used to warn younger clergy about the danger of becoming too entangled in administrative machinery, and secretly, one believes, he was happy when he was able to make his way up Queensferry Street and board a tramcar bound east.

V

In earlier days, when free from committee meetings, Laurie liked to prepare for his afternoon visiting by a quarter of an hour's intercession. Later, as the work of the parish grew, he was limited almost entirely to calling on the sick, or on people who were in difficulties, or to interviewing employers on behalf of some one who needed work.

" 2—2.15 : Prayers for those to be visited. Direction of intention." Admittedly he found it well nigh impossible to adhere to the time table of his Rule of Life, drawn up about the year 1903, and written down in his copy of " Before the Throne." Many people complained of the formlessness and unpunctuality of his day, but few realised how fervently he himself recognised the need of maintaining its general structure. His recorded acts of rededication are touching in their humility :—

" After Whitsunday 1923, and the most signal proof of protection, I renew my vow of utter surrender, of endurance, of union, and of work. I commend myself into the hands of the Blessed Trinity."

Or again—

" 31st December, 1926. In recognition of the mercy of God in the restoration to health and to

clearer vision, I resolve afresh to keep the above rule as far as may be possible . . . and above all to watch my daily meditation. In nomine. . . ."

But whether or not between the times of 2 and 2.15, whether on his knees in the church, or walking along the pavements, he did pray, and pray constantly, even continuously, for his people. And as he stood waiting at their doors he recollected his priesthood:

"Before entering any house, make the sign of the Cross on thy lips saying, In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. The Lord be in my heart and on my lips that I may worthily magnify His Holy Name, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen."

Immediately after this direction is a lengthy note, dated Iona, June 1907, which shows us his personal reflections not only upon visiting, but on his whole approach to pastoral work.

"First, life in the main. Must be gripped personally, must not be allowed to drift or to guide itself—must be *my own.* The great conception that my life is a channel of the power of God. That it is to free infinite power with immeasurable results. In the Name, etc. Rise up and walk: That the results are not to be the gauge of effectiveness, that life is to be independent of the world, whether in the little or the great. That deliberately chosen courses are to be chosen without relation to any public save God alone. Unhoping, unrecorded, unrepaid, save in the

openness to Christ and growing sense of Christ. Daily to restate this position to myself—count every departure from it a fundamental failure.

"In this way the personal colour will get its fullest value. I see further that the symbol of the Cross is eternal, that the Christ to be expressed as the redemptive force for men, and the ennobling redemption of the channel He passes through, is the Crucified Christ.

"What follows then?—Infinite patience and infinite pain, success through failure, the implanting of principles rather than the achieving of results. Results therefore must not be too objective.

"Further, that I must make up my mind now for great delay in the work. *His* net result, measured at His death, was twelve men and a few women. But all loved Him. Great slowness then, in deep and lasting results.

"Is the real and effective value of my life personal like His? It must be, but it can be vicariously applied. My failure is in attempting to be both centre and circumference—that is clearly impossible.

"My work therefore lies chiefly among the workers. *Seeing* for them—seeing their failures, guiding them, inspiring. Am I to touch the circumference at all? Yes, at all points where I can be of deep value—at Baptisms, Marriages, Funerals, the seriously ill, the dying, those who come for comfort, counsel, confession.

"This implies rigid discipline in arrangement of

life above all, forethought and far-reaching aims—can anyone bear the burden of little calls?

"In the more personal life I see that impatient activity has degenerated into self-pleasing: those things which appeal to the energies loudly are chosen, those things which ought to be chosen are left undone. And this has gone to such a length that it has grown into gross and wicked thoughtlessness—concerning itself with the easy immediate, leaving plans and thought and provision and prayer out of every department of life. I have been playing to an easy gallery all the time.

"So now it demands patience, proportion, forethought, weighing responsibilities, prayer, and above all, discipline of life. The minor difficulties all flow from this."

It is obvious that this note was written for a personal purpose without any thought of putting it into literary form for other eyes. Yet as we read it, especially those of us who are in orders, we cannot help feeling what courageous spiritual introspection has gone on here, and how strong was Laurie's hold upon the essential nature of priesthood. "To free infinite power with immeasurable results." One of the men who watched by his body in the Warriors' Chapel the night before the funeral tells how in the small hours, half hypnotised by the flickering light, he heard repeated over and over again the word "Liberate .... Liberate .... Liberate ...." It was the secret that Laurie shared with other and greater

mystics, St. Bernard, for instance: it was the reason why he, like them, could be the instrument of an achievement far beyond the natural capacity of any single individual.

Of his house to house visiting we know so much, and yet so little. Every family treasures a particular memory, a particular kindness, a particular phrase, and yet, just because such memories are numberless, it is impossible to anthologise them. One interesting factor, however, appears to be common—that his visits were primarily to make friends with people rather than to perform a private religious ministry. He was, of course, vigilant of their spiritual needs; often he would pray and read with them. Sometimes he would be asked to bless their houses and he would do it joyfully in the most thorough Bell, Book and Candle tradition—" The kitchen too," he would say, " that tempers may be kept there: " Last of all, he would ask the members of the family to kneel down. " There's no point in blessing the house if I don't ask God to bless you too."

So certain was his grasp of spiritual reality that he stood as a strong tower to those in bereavement or in anxiety about friends dangerously ill: to pray with him at such a time was to find real strength in quietness and confidence. Yet it remains true that his day by day contacts were primarily social, though somehow, afterwards, one knew that one had entertained an angel.

At a meeting of clergy a paper had been read on

Pastoral Visiting, and in the discussion that followed the respective merits of the loose leaf, the card index systems, etc., etc., had been actively canvassed. Laurie sat, chin in hand, quite silent, occasionally twinkling, through the tobacco smoke, at one of his curates, as point after point emphasising business-like efficiency was driven home. At last some one moved that Canon Laurie be heard and he rose slowly to his feet. "I have been listening to the discussion with great interest," he said. "Perhaps I am too old now to acquire these methodical habits myself, but I hope my young men have been listening carefully. . . . To me there seems to be only one thing important in visiting, and that is that you love your people. If you love your people, everything else follows quite naturally."

He sat down in an embarrassed silence, and there was no further discussion.

Laurie certainly loved his people. "If you get to know them as friends," he would tell his curates, "then they will turn to you in spiritual trouble."

And so he would set out from the church and climb interminable stairs in the tall tenement houses to make friends with people at the top—and truly it seemed as if two-thirds of the congregation lived on top floors. He possessed a collection of keys for private houses where he came and went as one of the family. An invalid, whose temper kept many away, used to send him out to "do her messages," as we say in Scotland, and frequently they were

purchases of a somewhat incongruous nature, but he never seemed to mind. "You'd make a grand howdie (midwife)," Sir Halliday Croom once said to him in admiration, and it is true, thank God, that many people recognise in their parish priest a minister of healing. When a mother was expecting a baby, he would get her to come to the church, month by month, to pray for the child and its home. Such a relationship of trust was usually established quickly: a gude wife admitted him to her house on his first visit with some misgiving—she had six children who were apprehensive of a black-coated "meenister" and were prepared to be uncommunicative. At the end of the visit all six noisily "chummed him" back from the Pleasance to Lauder House.

Often he went regularly to tea with some parishioner and then one afternoon he would say: "You're coming to tea with me to-day," and they would go off together to Fuller's. On many occasions he would take gifts—clothing for children, a cake into which he had stuffed a ten shilling note, a bottle of champagne for an invalid, boldly begged from a wealthy member if he had not the money for it himself, a book, perhaps not always chosen as carefully as it might be, as when he took Miss Balfour a volume entitled (appropriately, as Laurie thought) *Hope*. Miss Balfour was then in her late sixties and the book contained advice to an expectant mother!

And so it went on.

" 2.15—5," says his Rule of Life, " Visiting daily.
" 5.30—6, self-examination: record: prayers.
" 6—8, visiting daily.
" 8.30—10, visiting, classes, etc."

He was always among his people. No wonder he was so beloved. " No man," exclaimed an old lady petulantly, " no man has such a right to make himself so dear "!

Except when he was dining out, Laurie's evening meal was a hurried and variable affair. It was his time for preparing addresses, and the table beside his plate would be covered with books and papers. Mary Murray and his sister would leave their own food and run to get a volume or look up a reference. As like as not, neither meal nor address would be finished when he left the house.

This telescoping of activities was one of the more unsatisfactory features of his day. Laurie was a good preacher because whatever he brought out of his treasure house had been fruitfully meditated upon: one never complained of any dearth of spiritual truth. But only too frequently he had not enough time to select and arrange his material into a whole, above all, to discard themes and ideas closely allied to his main topic, so that one did occasionally complain that his sermons lacked that aesthetic unity—that consonantia, claritas, integritas, which Laurie was a great enough artist to desire—and also, when he was very tired physically, he often found difficulty in gathering together the threads of his discourse.

Though he attached greatest importance to being a good parish priest, he did not undervalue the importance of preaching, and resented (as being only *half* true!) the popular dictum that Presbyterians had it where sermons were concerned, and Episcopalians in the ordering of worship. When he was good, he was magnificent—one retains the memory of certain Good Friday addresses during the Three Hours, not so much of what he actually said, as of the prophetic and patriarchal impressiveness of his bearing in the pulpit.

Now it would be an address for some guild, and he would stuff his notes into his pocket, notes usually printed in block capitals with a soft pencil, and bang the door of Lauder House behind him, and make off to the church in that so characteristic stride, on the last lap of his long day.

VI

Daily evensong was at 7.30, and Laurie shared his turn of duty with the assistant priests. Only a few people would be present, but it was a pleasant, intimate office, read in the Seabury Chapel in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The Lectern Bible contained illustrations by Gustave Doré, and often, after the turning of a page, there would be a certain hiatus, as Laurie paused, fascinated by a

grisly picture of the destruction of Sodom or the end of Jezebel.

After evensong there were the old lags to be interviewed. Laurie knew the regular clients only too well; with strangers the co-operation of the church officer would be helpful, for he had already questioned them during the service and with gestures as mysterious as those of a tic-tac man he would signal information—the thumb jerked over the shoulder indicated a well known accomplice waiting at the foot of the stair, the lips curved as though to impart the divine afflatus implied that drink had been taken, the closing of the eyes meant that the yarn now being spun did not tally with a previous one. Such warnings affected Laurie but little; he was impulsively, even unwisely, generous. Yet there was inspired humanity even in his foolishness. "'They have no wine!'," wrote one of his heroes, Henry Scott Holland. "That is what has struck us so profoundly. Entire masses of our population have been discovered to be in that particular plight. It is not so much their abject poverty we are thinking of; nor the wretched homelessness of those classes who just scrape along from day to day, hovering over the abyss of pauperism or crime, liable to the terrors of starvation at every touch of exceptional pressure. No! rather the phrase from St. John comes to our lips as we rise above all the region of picturesque and melodramatic distress, and consider the lot of those who work their way along in dull, hard,

monotonous toil. . . . Everything in nature, though toil for food be its law, is given its opportunity of joy, its sense of fling, its moment of happy brimming release. . . . Why are they denied all that gives this earth its sparkle and its cheer? It cannot be by God's will. It is an unseemly accident. It is a disorder that ought to be remedied. 'Lord, Lord! they have no wine!'"

Laurie knew it as well as Scott Holland, and so he was never scandalised that people living on the dole should want to spend their money on cigarettes, or on going to the pictures, or even in public houses. He knew—who better?—that charity can demoralize. He knew also that joylessness was still more demoralizing than charity. One evening, having parted with half-a-crown to a plausible ruffian, he turned to watch him shamble off down the High Street. "He'll drink it," he remarked to a friend, "but, poor soul, he has little enough excitement in his life." Such inconsistency in one who had been instrumental in redeeming so many from drunkenness made him a sair sanct to puritanical social workers, but it was the action of one who, in the phrase so often on his own lips, had learned "to see life steadily and see it whole."

As Laurie interviewed the line of beggars the church might be filling with people coming to a guild meeting—fathers and mothers to whom he spoke so simply and intimately about the problems he knew they were facing; or young people, whose

doubts and temptations he could anticipate with a clarity that took one's breath away: there was nothing unreal in his preaching—Jesus had redeemed the whole of life, and Laurie's business was to show his people how to bring their individual lives, in every aspect, under the rule of God's Love.

If there were no guild meeting, he would probably look in for a moment at one of the numerous social activities of his young people, never interfering and therefore always welcome. All this work developed from personal contacts: he would rarely ask for volunteers to do a particular job, and he would even discourage, or at least put on probation, those who were anxious to help. Sometimes, of course, he made mistakes,but the length of time that certain people acted as Guild secretaries or Sunday School superintendents showed how well he was served by a chosen band.

"You're prepared for a few desultory remarks, I suppose?" he would ask his Cubmaster with a smile, if it was the night of a party. Otherwise he would watch quietly for a moment, enquire of some child about a sick brother or sister, and slip out unobtrusively to his visiting again. Each night it would be the same and yet different—the Mission, a hospital, the Canongate, a meeting, a dinner party.

"8.30—10: Visiting, classes, etc.

"10.30—12: Reading, etc."

No one loved better than Laurie to put on his slippers and draw his chair up to the fire with a book, yet

one may safely say that no item in his Rule of Life was more frequently crushed out than this one. He read, we have noted, while walking on the streets or riding in trams, but so far as this period of the day went it was the "etc." rather than the "Reading" that prevailed. What that "Etcetera" comprised depended upon a variety of factors, not least his own inventiveness. For instance, a young subaltern, who had given a hand with boys' work, was leaving to join his regiment in India. It was a wild night and Laurie had been ill, so a telephone message was sent begging him not to come out. But no, there, drawn up on the platform, was the Rector with a squad of boys, their hands raised to the salute. The gesture, both humorous and affectionate, did much to lighten the awkward moments of parting.

Or again, after visiting, he would go to the house of some one very ill and either sit and share the vigil, or lie down on a couch to rest until the patient might wake, or, maybe, regain consciousness. No stair of however ill repute could frighten him: mischief might be done with razors or stockings filled with sand, the landings might be littered with broken bottles and crockery after some drunken fracas, the panels of doors might be kicked in by tramps who came to sleep in the lobbies, yet in such surroundings only one danger—that of staged blackmail—ever threatened. For the rest, the priest, the doctor, and the district nurse bore charmed lives, and could go

without thought into streets where on Saturday nights the police patrols were doubled.

It is common knowledge that Laurie overdrove his body. One Thursday night before Christmas a friend went down to the Mission to walk with him up the Canongate and see him safely home, for he was far from well. It was late before the key was turned in the lock, and the street was deserted as they walked slowly up. Laurie stopped, turned aside, and was sick in the gutter. "Sorry, old boy," he apologized, cheerfully, "I'm afraid I'm in for gastric 'flu."

"Come on home then, quickly," urged his friend, "you ought to be in bed."

"Nonsense," came the retort, "Now, get away off yourself. There's one other visit I simply must pay."

And when at length he did "clamber to the heights of sleep," he would again kneel to pray.

"12—Cord: Cross: 6 daily: record S. ex. C.B." The cryptic entry which covered his vows as an associate of Cowley, the day's final act of penitence, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

EPILOGUE.

THERE is a tradition that S. John the Evangelist, in his old age, attained to such simplicity of spiritual perception that his teaching held but one phrase—"Little children, love one another." It is not claiming too much to suggest that a similar simplicity marked those final, those magnificently mature, years of Laurie's life.

Love for the "little children," young and old, who had been entrusted to him in his cure of souls, burned like a bright lamp in the increasingly frail temple of his body. The love never faltered, but, in its attempt to conceal the weakness of the body, unselfishness nearly developed into a rarified spiritual pride. The monthly day in bed was at last accepted with humorous deprecation, a hiding place where he might indulge his passion for cocoanut icing. Every artifice would be called into play when a temporary paralysis crippled a hand or an arm while at table. In the streets he could be observed leaning against railings and pretending to study his visiting notebook, while praying and waiting for strength to go on. Frequently it took him a quarter of an hour to make the hundred yards from Lauder House to the Church.

Yet love drove him to still greater sacrifice of time and energy and found an ever larger place in his addresses and sermons, until at last, after lengthy illnesses and absences, Death took him, as he himself would have wished, at his work.

Sunday, 25th April 1937, was also S. Mark's Day. Laurie was in unusually good form, and was willing to linger at the breakfast table.

"Read my cup, Mary," he said in his bantering way, "I've plenty of time."

"You're going on a long journey," she replied, turning the cup in her hands, "And there's a harp and a crown. I think you must be going to Heaven. And there are lots of hearts—everybody loves you. Yes, I think you must be going to Heaven."

Laurie chuckled. "And where did you think I'd go?" he asked.

A certain discomfort manifestetd itself after luncheon, but not enough to deter him from going along to the Church to prepare for his Catechizing. The blackboard was kept in an annexe of the church and he had begun to write on it: "We renounce the sinful desires of the flesh when we keep both our bodies and minds healthy and clean"; and at that point weakness overtook him and he called for Kenneth Fowler, the Church Officer, who brought a glass of water and then went to find a taxi. Slowly strength came back to him, and slowly he crossed the Altar, stopping, as always, to make a reverence, and paused again in the Warriors' Chapel. Slowly

he came down the steps into the church, forbidding anyone to help him, but as he reached the head of the Calvary Stairs, he was in such obvious distress that one of his teachers rose and held his arm.

"Will you take me home, Agnes?" he asked, and gave her the key of Lauder House. The descent was at last accomplished. Then, thoughts for his sister's anxiety, thanks to the taxi driver and to Agnes Hewit, apologies to Wilfrid Crick, his senior curate, for not being able to take the confirmation class. He lay quietly in an armchair in his study while his sister and Mary Murray tended him and telephoned for the doctor. Though breathless, he kept insisting, "Nonsense, nonsense, I'll be all right in a minute." Then he collapsed more completely. His sister put her arm round him, and his head fell back on her shoulder. One little sigh and he was gone.

Vested in his work-a-day cassock, green with age, and in surplice and stole, a crucifix beneath the hands folded on his breast, he lay very still and very beautiful, a gentle smile on his face. "The dead are more alive than we are," he used to say, and the tranquillity with which he laid aside the burden of the flesh was a moving parable of his certainty.

From Monday night until the funeral on Wednesday, his body lay in the Warriors' Chapel, burning tapers glowing against the rich purple cerecloth, a band of men watching and praying continuously at his side. And then the crowds who thronged the Church at the Requiem, and again when the Bishop

and Canon Mackay read the Burial Service, crowds that overflowed, literally in their thousands, into the streets, and stood bareheaded in silent homage—it seemed as if the whole Canongate turned out to take farewell of its beloved Priest, as the funeral procession moved slowly away to the Crematorium at Warriston where the last rites were performed and the last hymns sung by the choir.

The following day, at the early Service, his sister placed the urn containing his ashes in the marble floor of the chancel, and in the spring of 1940 a memorial plaque was dedicated on the eastern wall of the church. But his real memorial is elsewhere, graven on hearts rather than in stone.

"O most loving Father"—Laurie must often have prayed the well known words of Aquinas—they were in his favourite Prayer Book, "Grant me that Him Whom now in my pilgrimage I purpose to receive beneath a veil, I may hereafter behold for ever with unveiled face, even Thy beloved Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the Unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen."

For Laurie, that prayer is answered. The Light no longer shines in darkness. With unveiled face, he now beholds its glory—the Glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

S. Mark's Day, 1940.